University of Alberta

An Arts-Informed Project: Students' Engagement with Social Spaces

by

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Abstract

Evolving from my experiences of growing up in rural Alberta, this study examines the various ways in which a group of rural youth engage social spaces in their community. This data was gathered though a critical ethnographic approach. The participants are grade seven school youth who communicated their understandings of social space using arts-informed methods: a written response worksheet, photography, self-portraits and semi structured interviews. The dominant themes highlighted in this work are: living in community spaces, gendered spaces, and youth transgression (authority and discipline). The data suggests that the experiences of rural youth are often coded through media in similar ways to non-rural youth. Given the rich data in this study I conclude by suggesting some pedagogical and research recommendations.

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First, I must thank the staff and students of school who participated in this research project. George Dashkewytch and Rossanne Gebers accepted my research questions, while making me feel comfortable, and useful, in the classroom. I am thankful to the grade seven participants and their parents/guardians for their full engagement and willingness to share the data with the larger academic community. Bruce and Rose Hunt made me feel at home – in their home. I am especially grateful to their daughter, and my friend, Carmen for the fun times we shared feeding cows in the middle of winter and the sad times we have shared in grief over the past year.

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Third, to my friends: many of whom I met at varying stages in my academic career. We have learned and celebrated together, along the way. They have always expressed interest in my work and offered useful, insights. Perhaps most importantly, they have created a space for escape: one where I can retreat, find a warm meal and be social.

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Dedication

To my mom and dad.

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Introduction

Figure 1: The Road Home

My graduate work in the Faculty of Education has focused on relationships between marginalized populations – acknowledging the voices of those who are often identified as subaltern – and those who benefit from the hegemonic power imbalance within society (Gramsci, 1992; Green, 2002). In an effort to raise my awareness of how power works to enable and constrain social groups in society I examined theoretical frameworks such as critical theory and cultural studies (Apple, 2000; Hall, 1997; Razack, 2002). In reading these theories and theorists I began to reflect on my own experiences of growing up in a small rural community, Petite, where issues of marginalization and power first became evident to me.

While disconcerting, this process of reflection is a useful one and as Richard Johnson, Deborah chambers, Rarvati Raghuram and Estella Tincknell (2004) suggest, "no one should be put off a topic because it is too close to home or they are too involved" (p. 56). Further, my involvement had been lengthy and very personal in this community, with the resulting aim that the goal of my "research is to turn such difficulties and defenses into something we can use for fresh questioning, knowledge and social-personal change" (Johnson *et al.* 2004, p. 58). In adopting a more reflexive stance I began to realize that my experiences as a student and resident in the community where this study takes place most definitely affected my present-day understandings and observations. My interactions within this space and with my peers resulted in being socialized into pre-reflexive (Bourdieu, 1992; Johnson *et al.*, 2004) ideas regarding the gendered relationships between males and females, understandings of sexuality, socialized understandings of youth and adults, racialized relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, and those who come from diverse economic backgrounds.

As my research topic for graduate work developed it became clear to me that I needed to return to the place that first proved to be rich in exploring social relationships. Here I would be able to think through the various questions that were first raised in my youth. These questions were most definitely influenced by my observations and interactions in this rural community often fragmented by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alliances.

This small rural community in northern Alberta has a population of less than 300. This is where my parents worked as educators in the K-12 public school over a period of 15 years. Similarly to many youth who live in rural areas, we lived less than five blocks from the school, post office, grocery store, restaurant, church and playground. I spent most of my childhood on foot rather than in a car – with my parents and friends – exploring the immediate community.

It is also important to realize that differences exist between rural areas. These differences are evident when I reflect on my family's relocation to Castor (another rural community), when I was seven. In contrasting my experiences in Castor to those in Petite I can see that the newer and slightly larger community was able to offer wider social opportunities in terms of extracurricular activities. Holland and Andre (1987) argue, "the available research indicates that participation in extracurricular activities, including both athletic and nonathletic activities, is positively correlated with desirable personality/social characteristics" (p. 447).

After some time in the second rural community, we returned to Petite. Here, in contrast to my experiences in Castor, it became clear that those who were able to participate in extracurricular activities were primarily those whose parents had time and sufficient economic resources. In rural communities, access to private transport points to privilege and opportunities related to the car culture. "We may not be enthralled by cars, but the relationship of much of humanity to the world became increasingly mediated in the course of the last century by a single machine – the car" (Miller, 2001, p.1). In exploring theorization in the area of car culture (Carrabine & Longhurst, 2002; Maxwell, 2001; Miller, 2001) social and environmental concerns are often of focus. However, it is also Maxwell (2001) who illustrates that, "[car] use can often be an expression of help, care or love. This is clearly illustrated by car journeys that are undertaken primarily for the benefit of immediate family members" (Maxwell, 2001, p. 215). Participants in this study who used their vehicles in this way were able to use public amenities (like the skating rink and swimming pool) that were in a neighbouring town.

The importance of individual transportation and its relationship to youth experiences became evident when I returned to Petite. In contrast, to my own socio-economic upbringing, the majority of my peers in this community went back and forth to school by bus and an additional 30-minute commute for extra-curricular activities was impossible for most. Many had limited access to private transportation, or money to be able to pay club fees and participate in extracurricular activity. Economics, family and household obligations were a main concern for parents and often for their children who were eleven or twelve years old.

My parents made it possible for me to participate in extracurricular activities. The 50 kilometre commute (from Petite to the larger neighbouring town) meant we spent a substantial amount of time in the car which provided an opportunity to discuss our day to day activities. My parents shared many insights on that highway. The way I viewed the world, and specifically relationships within the school community, was most definitely shaped by our travels and conversations.

Some of our discussions focused on the tensions of racialization. When we moved back to Petite this was a new revelation to me but an evident component of life in this rural community: at school, students often migrated to opposite sides of the classroom seating plan based on what overtly appeared to be racialized boundaries. Later, I was able to process the family ties among my classmates and the geographical location of where most students lived and how that translated to and formed classroom spaces. For example, many who rode the same bus chose to sit together in the classroom. These racialized and spatialized friendships appeared to be both geographically shaped as well as enforced by the physical structures in the town, reserve and farming areas.

Reflecting on these experiences, I clarified the goals for my research. First, I wanted to learn how the students in this rural school perceived and interacted with one another in the common spaces offered by the school and the surrounding community. Second, I wanted to examine how insights gained from students in their exploration and perception of space, and relationships, could aid in the development of curriculum and pedagogical strategies in school. It was important to me that the work not only serve my academic pursuits, but that as with feminist researchers and qualitative researchers it also work in a reciprocal way for those who gave me the opportunity to return and carry out my research (Lather, 1991; Marshall, 2006).

As Johnson *et al.* (2004) encourages, it became necessary to recognize my "partiality" and "positionality." This recognition is necessary before any real change can be proposed or enacted (Johnson *et al.*, 2004). Consequently, when I engaged theoretical literature, my understandings of youth were often influenced by my experiences growing up in this specific rural environment. Similarly, I considered curricular and legislative changes through the lens of one who was schooled in this environment and was in a privileged position as a white, middleclass, able-bodied heterosexual female.

When I was eleven, we moved back to Petite and I immediately resumed friendships with those who lived in close proximity to me; many of whom were the children of adults with whom my parents had maintained contact. Upon reflection, the friendships I resumed were with other white children who were my age. When school recommenced, in September, I became aware of how many children were in fact my age. My circle of friends began to broaden. However, my friends informed me of which students had a reputation of being tough (primarily Aboriginal students) and of those who lived in the nearby group home. These students were not part of our social circle and spatial practices reinforced these distinctions.

I did become quite close with one Aboriginal female student who was my age, and lived close to the school. We spent a great deal of time together at my house or at school. I do not recall asking my parents if I was allowed to "sleep over" at her home but I regularly asked if I could invite her to ours and my parents always agreed. This form of racialized /classed learning was not taught overtly but was acquired, at some point, through informal learning.

The public school we both attended, and where I later conducted the research for this masters thesis, is in Petite and consists primarily of the descendants of those who are indigenous to this territory, and the descendants of white settlers who migrated to this area in early 1900s to start businesses or to farm. There are two schools: a band operated school and a public provincial school. In 2006 I returned to the public school to explore the questions I had been grappling with since adolescence: questions of power, privilege and community. The school population is roughly the same as the population of the village in which it exists (slightly below 300). According to the 2001 census, only 60 residents of the village were of school age. Hence, the majority of those who attend the school are bussed from neighbouring communities that do not have schools of their own, two First Nations reserves, and farms or acreages. While growing up here, I became aware (to some extent) of the effects of racialization, economic disparity, and some tensions and pressures regarding gender and adolescent development.

The space that I occupied as a young child (Petite) felt quite different when we moved back following my eleventh birthday. During this second experience in the same place, I found myself questioning my comfort levels; the informal and formal rules in this new school were overwhelming. The way students and adults interacted in the school was unfamiliar to me. Most adults seemed to be there primarily to enforce the rules, and this was not the way I perceived my relationship with adults in the past. Of course, there were warm and caring adults as well, but the rules I now encountered were foreign to my experiences in Petite as a young child and in Castor (primarily a white middle-class community). The third time I reentered this space – this time to gather research for this thesis – it was evident that my research questions were inspired by my upbringing.

The primary question that guides my graduate research thus far is: How do students perceive and engage community spaces and subsequently the people they interact with in such spaces? I came to this question first by identifying the demographic I was interested in working with, and then identifying an appropriate methodology. Knowing the course offerings in Petite School, and having some idea of the limited extra-curricular opportunities, I anticipated that the youth would enjoy working with art and taking pictures. From the initial guiding question, I identified the following sub-questions:

- How do school youth articulate their relationships with spaces and one another using written, visual and oral forms of communication?

- What are the differences and similarities of how students perceive public spaces?
- What makes school youth feel welcome or accepted in a given space?

My experiences as a student and researcher are included in this introduction. I have made an effort to overtly share my socio-economic and racialized positioning within this community, and in turn, society. While I was not directly linked historically to either those who are indigenous to this territory or to the white people who colonized these lands, the fact that my ancestors were European and that my parents moved here to work in the public school meant that I was aligned primarily with the white-settler community.

Again, I have made an effort to acknowledge my "partiality" and "positionality" to enable me to move toward the data through the perspective of the research participants while engaging relevant theory. This was done in an effort to heighten the voices, and acknowledge the awareness, of the youth who participated in the research for this master's thesis.

Thesis Overview

There are six chapters within this thesis that work together to explore my research questions. Chapter one explores the meaning of space and examines the local historical texts to give an overview of the interaction between Aboriginal and white settler communities. Chapter two is an overview of the literature on youth and socialization especially the effect that media have on youth in general as well as rural youth in particular. Chapters three and four examine, via an audit trail, my methodology and methods used within the research: in particular I highlight the use of arts-informed methods. Chapters five and six present the data, and include thematic analysis of the data in relation to the literature. The final section contains conclusions and recommendations for both pedagogy and research practices.

Chapter One: Socio- Historical Construction of a Community

Figure 2: Downtown

The previous chapter outlined my research questions while identifying my relationship to the site and subject. This chapter has two sections: the first will explore existing literature on the concept of social space, focusing on Lefebvre's understandings as presented in his well known text, the *Production of Space* (1974). The second section of this chapter maps out a socio-historical understanding of development of Petite.

Social Space

I have chosen to explore space, or more specifically social space, through the works of Henri Lefebvre (1958), Bo Grönlund (2004) based on the Lefebvre's 'Production of Space' (1974), Stuart Elden (2004), Sharene H. Razack (2002), Edward W. Soja (1996) as well as Jennifer Kelly and Brett Lashua. In reference to space, the works above refer to Lefebvre's philosophical understandings of space as foundational and have complimented one another in helping form my understanding of social space. At this point in this chapter, I explore understandings of social space through the foundation works of Lefebvre as used in a number of secondary works.

It is important to begin by identifying the philosophical understanding that space is socially constructed (Foucault 1980, Lefebvre 1974). Further, Kelly and Lashua assert that space is socially "produced within discourse". The issue then becomes exploring understandings of space through the ways it is engaged and represented and how these understandings are transmitted.

Lefevbre (1991) tells us that "(social) space is a (social) product" (p. 26). He tells us that space, and social life, exist where "all 'subjects' are situated… they must either recognize themselves or lose themselves, a space which they may both enjoy and modify" (p. 35). For a space to be socially constructed it does not need to be physically created (like most urban settings). Spaces in nature, such as the ocean, are socially constructed and modified in that they are take up and engaged in a variety of social ways (fishing, relaxation, mode of transport etc). In relation to the questions this thesis explores, it is important to consider the perceptions youth hold in the context of the socio-historic use and production of space: particularly with a focus on the Canadian context and notions of the white settler as well as indigenous peoples.

The constructs – and intersections – of power, space and race play out clearly through the work of Razack (2002). Here, she highlights the specific relationship between the three concepts when she tells us that, "Racialized populations seldom appear on the settler landscape as other than this racial shadow; when they do, as David Goldberg writes, they are 'rendered transparent… merely part of the natural environment, to be cleared from the landscape – urban and rural – like debris" (p. 3-

4). While Native inhabitants were relocated and represented[1], so was the land upon which they had lived for numerous generations. White settlers acquired titles to segmented parcels of land in order to prepare it for a European agricultural based economy. The physical purpose and appearance of the landscape changed noticeably through white settlement. However, Robert Shields (1999) proposes that, "space is both produced and productive: it is something that evolves historically rather than being created separately from a society" (p. 158).

The way the landscape was physically reconstructed, and used, can be explored through the lens of Lefebvre vis-à-vis his understandings of social space. In *The Production of Space* (1974), Lefebvre criticizes traditional dualistic understandings of space as comprised of natural (or physical) space and mental space alone. He does this by proposing the existence of a third space, that of the social. As shown on figure 3 below, Grönlund (1998) illustrates Lefebvre's triad of space visually through the following diagram:

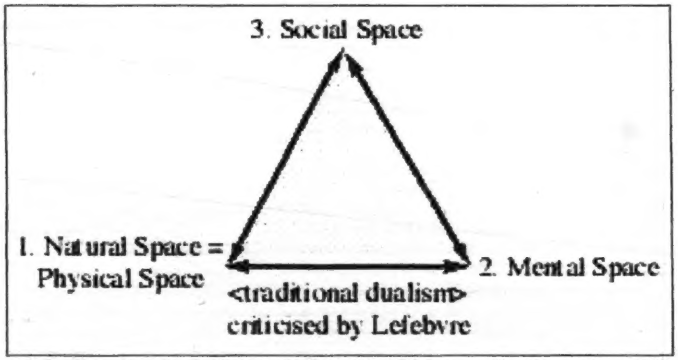
3. Social Space
1. Natural Space = Physical Space
2. Mental Space
<traditional dualism> criticised by Lefebvre

Figure 3: Grunland - Lefebvre's Starting Point on the Question of Space

Here, Lefebvre proposes different levels of space, from the natural ('absolute space'), to the mental ('abstract'), to more complex spatialities whose significance is socially produced ('social space'). The components of this triad influence perceptions of, and engagement with, one another. Lefebvre not only acknowledges that a social space exists but he goes further to explore the relationship among the three. In fact, elements of social space emerge through their connection to the natural (real) and mental (imagined) in creating lived (social) spaces, that of the real-and-imagined. These notions open the question; "can space be seen as natural or real alone?" According to Soja (1996), this is not possible in that space is not innocent and is incapable of being neutral in that it is always culturally constructed; spaces changes with the ways it is consumed and conserved by those who occupy it. Therefore, it is impossible for space to be seen as only natural, mental or social; rather, these three elements interdependently enable us to make sense of space.

---

[1] One example of this being the forced western dress in residential schools.

Lefebvre (1974) takes the proposed notion of social space and breaks it down into three inter-related elements: lived space (spaces of representation), perceived space (spatial practice) and conceived space (representational space). The connection between these three elements is referred to as Lefebvre's ontological transformation of space, and is depicted in Grönlund (1998), where he presents the elements of Lefebvre's re-conception of space as a circular relationship.

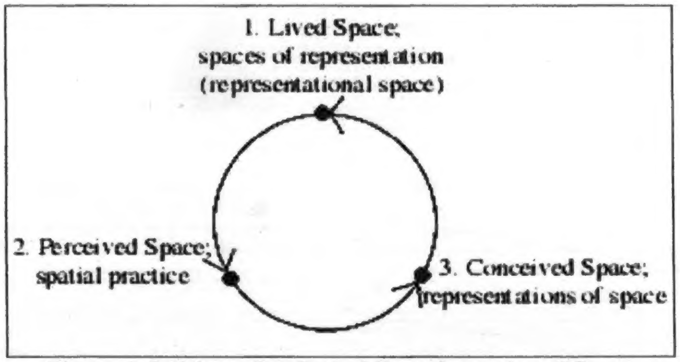

Figure 4: Lefebvre Ontological Transformation of Space

In terms of Lefebvre's explanation of space, perceived space (real or concrete, Grönlund would say natural) works with conceived space (imagined or abstract, Grönlund's mental) to create understandings of social space (lived or engaged). However, social engagement in turn affects the way space is perceived and conceived. For example, the physical reshaping of land through white settlement has affected the way the landscape is physically shaped, mentally conceived and socially engaged. The social relationship between people in terms of terrain shapes the land's imagined purpose, sequentially changing the way it is taken up and how it affects interaction with the land itself and those who associate with it.

Lefebvre, as a Marxist, argues that socially producing urban spaces is foundational to the reproduction of society – and consequently capitalism. Social space is produced – its intended function is to operate in a way that ensures order and creates inequalities of power. "Social space is the location of the reproduction of relations of production and of 'society' in all its complexity" (Shields, 1999, p. 153).

Formation of a Community

The village of Petite is located on the curved Fish Lake bed, south of Lesser Slave Lake in Alberta, Canada. It is said that, prior to colonization, Swans would come to nest in this area. Consequently, this area was given the Cree name, Wapisew Sepi which was later translated to the English, Fish Lake. In terms of the present day, Fish Lake remains the name of the First Nation within which the village of Petite exists, and where my study takes place.

This section consists of related literature that provides background to understanding my larger research project. Within Petite the racialized and spatialized dimensions can be addressed through an examination of aspects of social change and development related to changes in infrastructure and mobility. These developments involved changes in the way the landscape is physically shaped, mentally conceived and socially engaged. So for example I highlight changes in transportation brought about by the railroad and other institutional and physical changes brought about by the development of residential and mass schools in the community. Throughout my discussion of these issues I recognize that while Petite is the focus of my research, understanding of the community is also related to the wider socio-economic and socio-historical changes taking place within Canadian society.

This section introduces the socio-historical development of the community: the site for my research. This development is examined through an overview of land settlement, economic development, railway transportation and schooling. The public school that I attended is the research site in this project and provides a common space for complex interaction between different groups of students. The school has been part of the historical development of at least two separate communities – Aboriginal and White settler. I will examine how school youth perceive social spaces within the community and how they interact within those spaces. Although a major aspect of my research is to examine relations between youth it also recognizes gendered, raced and classed identifications that affect the ways in which students interact at school. These gendered, racialized and classed dimensions are constructed and operate within a socio-historical context discussed in this chapter.

Socio-historical Development

Very little recorded historical data is available on the specific community of Petite. For that reason I have drawn on wider Canadian historical dimensions to explain some of the social changes that took place during the development of Petite as a community. In terms of Petite I draw on a primary text, *Sodbusters: A history of Petite and Fish Lake settlements.* This edited collection, compiled in 1979 by residents of the Village of Petite, consists of the narratives of several community members. While the publication gives a good overview of the community we should note the following caution by E.H. Carr (1961,1990):

> [Facts] are like fish swimming about in a vast and sometimes inaccessible ocean; and what the historian catches will depend, partly on chance, but mainly on what part of the ocean he chooses to fish in and what tackle he chooses to use – these two factors being, of course, determined by the kind of fish he wants to catch. By and large, the historian will get the kind of facts he wants. (p. 23)

Thus as we read the accounts outlined in *Sodbusters: A history of Petite and Fish Lake Settlements* we should be mindful that although many narratives have been shared, just as many interpretations of the development of the community are not present. In reading my own overview in this chapter one should be mindful again that my own presentation here is a synthesis of this document and is thus only one interpretation. Recognition of the significance of history as interpretation also addresses my "partiality" and "positionality" (Johnson *et al.*, 2004) as discussed in Chapter 1.

Unlike the white settler history of Petite, I was unable to find any public written accounts of the development of community from Aboriginal perspectives. For this reason, I will draw on a broader understanding of Aboriginal groups and their relations with non Aboriginal groups. In particular I use the work of Aboriginal scholars such as Battiste (2000), Youngblood Henderson (2000), and Lawrence (2002). In examining these theorists it is evident that Aboriginal groups had similar, although not the same, experiences with regard to colonization: issues such as physical relocation of groups, suppressing Aboriginal languages and cultures, cognitive imperialism, negotiation of treaties, etc. As Battiste (2004) argues,

> "We must recognize the impact of these actions on the once self-sustaining nations that were disaggregated, disrupted, limited or even destroyed by the dispossession of traditional territory, by the relocation of Aboriginal people, and by some provisions of the Indian Act" (p.6).

Aboriginal Settlement

Each of the First Nations has a different version of history, influenced by individual events and cultural experiences. For several generations prior to colonization, historical accounts were shared orally. Both oral communications and written texts attempt to encapsulate events of the past for the use of future generations. "Aboriginal historians and many non-Aboriginal scholars now reject the view that written materials are more reliable than oral memories" (Conrad & Finkel, 2006, p. 8). However, for the purposes of this thesis I will explore understandings of Canadian colonization and white settlement through written texts alone. I do this because it is difficult to access oral traditions given the time limitations of a thesis and also because it may be difficult for me to access these as an outsider.

Aboriginal peoples adapted to, and engaged, their surroundings (Canada's vast landscape and varied geographical environments) successfully for thousands of years before colonization. Trading relationships, between nations, were a regular part of life for the majority of the First Nations. Trading with European nations began in the fifteenth century when Europeans arrived on the eastern shore board regularly. “In the period from 1763 to 1821, Natives continued to vastly outnumber the Europeans throughout the Northwest and British Columbia, and they became willing, often enthusiastic participants in the fur trade” (Conrad & Finkel, 2006, p. 206). However, with increased numbers of white settlers, and a desire to colonize, these relationships eventually became quite toxic.

For example, in Petite from the time Treaty Eight was signed on June 21, 1899, until 1936 all Indigenous people around the nearby lake were treated as one group. In 1936 the Department of Indian Affairs was made a branch of the Department of Mines and Resources. During this same year, the people surrounding the lake were divided into four settlements. Each settlement chose one Chief and a Band Council to replace the previous single governing body. Prior to Treaty Eight, those who lived in this region were somewhat migratory while still having traditional areas of occupation.

European Settlement: Mentally conceiving the landscape

Dominating the trading market was a goal for both the First Nations and Europeans. Companies based in Montreal as well as the Hudson Bay Company (HBC) traveled north-west with speed in an attempt to forge alliances, map territory, and acquire pelts. In 1783-84, the Montreal merchants and Anglo-Americans trading in the west joined forces to create the North West Company (NWC). However, NWC operated in a very aggressive manner often threatening and beating Native Peoples in an effort to secure their trade goods (Conrad & Finkel, 2006, p. 209).

The move further west was motivated by the deteriorating numbers of game in the east. Native peoples had maintained control of their traditional territories; there was European competition so trading prices were favourable for most Natives. However, in Canada, this changed in 1821 when the number of furs declined dramatically and a trading monopoly (HBC amalgamation with NWC) arose (Conrad & Finkel, 2006).

The war of 1812 not only affected the relationships between Canadians and those who lived in the United States, it also affected the way Native peoples were treated by the Canadian government. Native people were seen as strong military allies should force be necessary against the United States. After the war, immigrants came to Canada in large numbers.

Reserves were established and Britain believed that the best chance for survival of Native and Métis peoples was assimilation of Indigenous practices into Christianity and farming (Conrad & Finkel, 2006, p. 266). Some people responded by accepting the European imposed lifestyle while others moved north-west to pursue a livelihood independent of European influence. Cree and Assiniboine peoples migrated westward, which was Blackfoot territory, and Métis peoples moved south into Sioux territory. "The result was increasing warfare among Native groups as they competed for a share of declining resources" (Conrad & Finkel, 2006, p. 308).

However, government sanctioned reserves did not prove to be safe territory for Native peoples either. Conrad and Finkel (2006) quote a document issued by the Legislative Assembly of Canada in 1856 saying, "The hardy pioneer who in advance of his fellows plunges with a half sullen resolution into the forest, determined to make a home for himself, is not likely to be over-scrupulous in respecting reserve lands" (p. 268). This proved to be the case in much of Canada, and specifically Petite, which I will explain in more detail in the railway subsection of this chapter.

Historically the relations between white settlers and Aboriginal communities have been framed through colonization. In terms of Alberta, initial contact with Native communities was made primarily by religious leaders and those who were involved in the fur trade. Alberta's first missionary, Wesleyan Methodist Robert Rundle began his ministry for the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Edmonton in 1840. Rundle traveled to surrounding communities to baptize, marry, and generally convert Native Canadians. By 1842, the Roman Catholic Church established a mission in the neighbouring community, Lac Ste. Anne (Berry & Brink, 2004, p. 64).

Many missionaries felt their role was to prepare Native people for the new society. However, through their "educating" procedures, the missionaries initiated much of the change themselves. Berry quotes Methodist missionary John MacLean, who said, "civilizing the Indian race… implies the full transformation and development of the nature of the individual, the complete overthrow of religious, political and social customs, and very many changes in the domestic relations of the people" (Berry & Brink, 2004, p. 62). In 1869, the Canadian government purchased Rupert's Land (the Northwest) from the Hudson's Bay Company (Swanson, 1985). In the 51 years following the seizure of the Northwest, the Canadian government entered into eleven treaties with Canada's Native inhabitants, including the territories upon which Alberta was founded (Treaties six, seven and eight).

According to Tobias (1985) the principles of Canada's Indian policy were to protect Natives and their land, "civilization," and assimilation in the long term (Tobias, 1985, p. 204). The Indian Act of 1876 resulted in the location ticket[2] which was seen as pivotal in ensuring "civilization." Consequently, the reserves were surveyed into individual lots that the band would distribute to individual members. There was a probationary period before the land title would be official. Alternatively, Native people who earned professional degrees from a university would immediately receive a land title, as this was seen as a sign that Euro-Canadian values were accepted (Tobias, 1985, p. 205).

In line with experiences in other areas of Canada, most Aboriginal people in the Petite area believed that amicable relations were possible with the Europeans who arrived here in the mid 1600s. Generally Aboriginal people gladly participated in the fur trade (Conrad & Finkel, 2006). It is believed that the first white settlers came to the area where Petite is now located in 1897. This original settler family built a house on the creek bank where the descendents of many white settlers still live. Few of the original settlers were still in the area when others came in the fall of 1914.

One of the most significant changes in the physical landscape, the railroad, followed that same year. In 1911, a charter was granted to the Edmonton, Dunvegan and British Columbia Railway to lay track through the Peace Country in Northwest Alberta. The intended track would run from Edmonton, Alberta to Dawson Creek, British Columbia. The tracks first crossed through the area in which Petite is situated in 1914.

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[2] documents showing rights to live in and use a reserve land

Without having first consulted the band or the Department of Indian Affairs, the track cut directly through the reserve. The following year, after negotiation, the Department of Indian Affairs accepted financial compensation for the railway line and train station. In 1916 the band held a vote and decided to relinquish a portion of land surrounding the train station for the purposes of building a town site. Three years later, payments were made for the site and the land was officially declared, "off reserve."

The railway line and train station created a place that marked the community on the Alberta map. The operation of the railway resulted in the construction of a number of paid positions as well as the consequent establishment of a grain elevator, post office and other businesses to serve those who passed through. It also reduced the amount of time it took to travel the 300 kilometres to Edmonton from weeks (traveling by horse or oxen) to nine hours by way of train. Railway was a source of employment, transit and a map placer for the growing white community.

With regard to the train's influence on the surrounding community, in 1921 the train station changed its name from Fish Lake to Petite. This became the new name of the settlement, as per postal regulations. It was obvious that the train, or rather the establishment and governing body of the train, was impacting the reserve and settlement.

As was the case in many communities during this period, the location of a railroad within the community was the catalyst for economic growth and development. In Petite between 1914 and 1921 several businesses took shape throughout the settlement. Some of these businesses provided services as well as employment and included a billiards hall, post office, United Farmers of Alberta (UFA) and bank.

While the community of white settlers continued to grow, the indigenous population experienced decimation of its population during the flu epidemic of 1918 and 1919. At this time approximately half of the local Aboriginal population was annihilated. White settlers also died of the same flu but in much smaller numbers.

Many white settlers homesteaded in the river valley, which was known for its good agricultural land and lush grasses. Those who came to this area in the late 19th and early 20th centuries squatted on the land while raising horses and cattle. This form of subsistence continued until after World War II when the land was sold to those who occupied it.

Other settlers came directly from the United States, eastern Canada and abroad: North Dakota, Maine, Nova Scotia, Vermont, Quebec, Utah, Ireland via Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, Kentucky, Belgium and Scotland. Many of those who migrated north-west did so after hearing of the "golden opportunities [and] free land" (p. 46). Most tried to follow the Klondike trail and aspired to establish business or farm in the Peace River country. For example, one family migrated north from Edmonton to live at the Fish Lake Settlement from 1913 to 1922. At this point, they were offered, and accepted, the postmaster position (now in Petite).

In 1932, European settlers requested that their water tank be housed on band property. They additionally proposed a new bridge and both of the settlement's requests were granted by the government. In 1953 the band voted to sell six parcels of land to non-Native people. This is the territory where Petite (and the Fish Lake First Nation) are still situated.

A highway passing through the area was completed in 1959. This changed the relationship with transportation dramatically. Since it was now possible to travel the 300 kilometres via automotive in less than half the time of the train and according to individual timetables.

The train tracks were at the north end of the town site and the highway was south of this point approximately five kilometres (south of the surrounding reserve). This geographical divide meant that those who were driving through the area did not pass through the settlement. Many of those who formerly passed through the area on train were no longer supporting the local businesses.

Other factors contributed to social changes within the communities. The closure of the grain elevator in the early 1970s brought about massive change regarding the railway in Petite. This is likely the result of two contributing factors: first, the centralization of grain delivery and second, increased cattle production and consequent change in crops (Baade & Rask, 1975). Passenger transportation ceased in June 1974. As a result, no trains stopped on their way through, and the number of trains in general decreased substantially.

Schooling

Schools as institutions became a significant factor not only in terms of physically reshaping the landscape but also the ways schools changed how the people socially engaged with space.

In Petite, by 1900 Native children were picked up on the steam boat to go to school in Grouard. Several children attended St. Peter's Indian Residential School (Lesser Slave Lake Indian Residential School). This school was operated by the Church of England from 1900 to 1932. Later, St. Bernard Indian Residential School in Grouard became the primary residential school in this area. This was one of few Roman Catholic residential schools in the north. It was in operation from 1939 to 1962.

A Petite resident recalls being let out for summer holidays (at age six) and traveling home on the steam boat. Upon completion of her schooling she worked in a restaurant and did housekeeping for several families. She later worked for a white family as a store hand and babysat their child who was paralyzed from the waist down (Quinn & McLaughlin, 1979). This narrative is one of many who attended residential school in the area. It is, of course, easier to access written narratives of those who are proud of their accomplishments than those who had a negative time after leaving residential school.

In 1912 the Fish Lake School District #2750 was established. That same year the first school board was set. Three white men who had come to this area in the 20 years prior were elected as the first school board members. Their first goal was to hire a teacher. A log house was built entirely by volunteers associated with the Methodist church ministry. This school was referred to as the Valley School and in the first September eight students[3] registered: all were descendents of white settlers.

The following January property taxes were instilled at a rate of eight and one eighth cents per acre. Hence, those who had a quarter section were taxed $13 per year. In May, 1914 it was decided that the school year would run May through September and property taxes were reduced to $8 per quarter section. These taxes supported the school operations.

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[3] Seven being the required number for an official school

In 1918 a Seven Day Adventist School opened (also in the valley) and approximately 18 students studied here. This school operated for three years at which point they encountered problems and the students (all descendents of white settlers) transferred to the Valley School.

By 1921 more people had moved to this area and those who already lived there had more children: it was evident that a new school was necessary. The original log building showed signs of deterioration. This same year it was decided that a school would be necessary at the town site. Plans were constructed for a two room school but until it was ready classes were held in the UFA hall. For most years there were two teachers but there were times when only one teacher was hired for grades one to nine with as many as 90 students. This was likely a result of the small population and limited tax base.

In 1933, a number of settlers in the area petitioned the Department of Education for the establishment of the Eula Creek School District #4678. Authorization was approved and a $780 grant was awarded for school construction. A plot of land, labour and materials were donated. After nearly two years of construction the school opened. Fourteen students studied here in its first year.

The first public, divisional school, was built on the village site in 1949. This six-room school was officially opened in January 1950. When this school opened its doors it became the local school for children who lived in the valley as well. This was the first year a bus was used to transport the decedents of the settled valley to the village. Between 1946 and 1956 the school had a total number of twelve rooms. This was the primary school for the southern lake shore (a distance spanning approximately 100 km). Children who lived on the reserve attended Petite School by this time.

Tragedy struck just six years later when the school was destroyed by fire. Within days classes resumed in a number of community buildings including the UFA hall and United Church. The new school opened the same year and several additions were made over the eight years following.

Driven by community support, a band-operated school first opened on the Fish Lake First Nation in 1995: 15 students registered. At its population peak thus far, 92 students attended grades 1-12 in 2000. During my time in Petite for the research generation portion of this thesis, rumours circulated that the school was facing the potential of closure having restructured to 44 students in grades 7-12. However, the school is still operating and population appears to be healthy with four teaching staff, one counsellor and one support staff. The majority of the students come from the Fish Lake First Nation and the Lake's Edge First Nation.

Industry

The land identified as Petite has been physically shaped, mentally conceived and socially engaged most significantly by the development of an economic infrastructure. Imperial Lumber opened a plant in Petite just steps from the railway in 1947. The vast number of spruce trees in the area lent itself to the industry. Imperial intended to run the plant for a minimum of 20 years. The mill did eventually close, as it was unable to yield at the same levels of other plants that were owned by the same company. Many of the men who were hired to work at the plant were then transferred to other regions.

The primary industries in this area are forestry, oil and gas and farming. To a lesser extent fishing and tourism are a form of income. The school is a major employer in this community. It attracts professionals to the area offering them teaching opportunities. Additionally, it is an aspect families consider when choosing where to live and raise children.

Between 1951 and 1959, the population of the village rose from 238 to 316. In 1960 oil exploration in the area resulted in a population of 459. This number remained relatively constant growing as high as 472 until 1965 when the regional oil and gas centre was established approximately 70 kilometres south of Petite. Consequently, by 1971 the population had dropped to 267. The 2001 Statistics Canada census recorded a population of 230 and Alberta Municipal Affairs estimates that this number has remained constant for the following four years (Alberta First, 2006).

According to Statistics Canada (2001), 305 people lived on the Fish Lake First Nation. The median age of those surveyed was 23.9 compared to the provincial median of 35. Ten of the people surveyed were identified as non-Aboriginal. With regard to religion, 250 are Catholic while the remaining 55 identified protestant, other religions and no religious affiliation in close proportion. 130 of those living on reserve worked during the previous year and 45 worked the full year. 115 people were identified as being part of the labour force. The primary employer was said to be the health and education industry with 30 people identifying this as their sector of employment. Of those remaining, the industries identified included agriculture and resources, construction and manufacturing, wholesale and retail, and other services (Statistics Canada, 2001).

A household questionnaire was conducted prior to the 1975 report regarding problems and prospects for the community. Only one person surveyed did not want the community to grow. The majority thought that the village would still exist in twenty years but approximately half of those surveyed did not want to see their children living here. The surveyors hired by the provincial government inferred that this was largely due to the limited social and economic opportunities available. The majority of those who completed the survey said that they would move for employment reasons (Baade & Rask, 1975).

"Petite functions as a low order service centre for the adjacent Indian Reserve and agricultural area. The businesses within the village are dependent upon this small trade area" (Baade & Rask, 1975). The village has limited possibilities for expansion since it is encompassed by the first nation, has limited services and the water and sewage systems are limited.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have presented a literature review of social space, focusing on Lefebvre's theoretical understandings. I have also identified the socio-historical understanding of development of Petite while emphasizing tensions and moments of historical significance for those who were indigenous to this region as well as white settlers. The primary source for this was the village's historical document, *Sodbusters*. I have tried to balance this historical account with data from other Aboriginal historians and social theorists who have written about colonization in the western context but not this community (or communities) specifically. The next chapter will address existing literature on youth and youth culture. In the chapters following, these two literature review chapters will be taken up in the context of my research project for this thesis.

Chapter Two: Literature Review of Youth

Figure 5: Blue Bird

This chapter provides an overview of the theoretical literature that engages with the main object of my analysis, namely youth who live in rural areas. As has become the case in the western society, globalization has played a major role in defining culture, including that of youth culture. Globalization refers to the worldwide connection and integration of nations, individuals and corporations as well as rural youth. The result of such interconnectivity is a hegemonic economy, culture and political system. "Today's youth are the quintessential inhabitants of postmodern and global life because they are the first generation to live integrated with the changing spheres of cyberspace, and hyperreality where medial culture, laptops, stem cell research, and other emerging technologies are radically altering all aspects of life" (Vautour, 2006, p. 25). Through this process, western market culture has spread in an effort to increase marketization and ultimately, profits.

Given global market conditions, mass media and consumer trends, the ways youth engage the market is of interest. Naomi Klein highlights the way technology, youth culture and the wearing of visible logos, or "branding," plays out in globalized contexts. Branding is the act of advertising clothing labels on ones body. "Branding, in its truest and most advanced incarnations, is about corporate transcendence" (Klein, 2000, p. 21).

Generally, technological advancements have made it possible to access social spaces that were once inaccessible due to time or geographic location. This has made it possible for youth to connect, and identify with populations, spaces and cultures which were once inaccessible. Communities that are linked through media rather than location are what Kelly (2006) refers to as "horizontal communities". For example, these horizontal communities are produced through technology, which mobilized music and the way youth interact with it and through it.

MTV was introduced in the mid 1980s as a way for musicians to promote their popular music (from the radio) visually as well as by producing video clips to accompany the lyrics and rhythm of individual songs. However, the cultural outcomes attributed to MTV were much broader than music consumption. MTV made it possible to communicate messages in only three to five minute segments arranged back to back. These messages included the dissemination of contemporary and "cutting edge" dance moves, fashion and language. The creators of MTV, "[understood] that young people would not be confused by rapid nonlinear TV images, and that they would be massaged by the producers' recognition and signalling of their media and cognitive savvy" (Kincheloe, 2006, p. 89). These fast moving methods have since translated to other components of youth culture (and cultural distribution) such as instant messaging and MP3 players or iPods. Having highlighted youth culture I will now delve into it in depth.

According to the United Nations Convention on the rights of the Child, childhood includes all persons from 0 to 18 years, including youth in the broader childhood years. This agrees with the understanding that adolescence/youth and childhood are conceptual categories. However, these two categories are not universal states, "rather they are culturally produced and as such will vary across time and place" (Nayak and Kehily, 2008, p. 7).

While the participants in this study could be classified as either children or youth, both categories mark segments in time and development where people are not yet part of adult society. The participants I worked with appear to be on the cusp between the two socially constructed categories for a number of reasons. As Nayak and Kehily among others (i.e. Warner, 1994; Valentine, 2004) suggest, "the concept of childhood in the West is underpinned by twin images of children as either innocent angels or evil devils" (p. 7). This concept surfaced in my study and is later addressed in chapter five through figure seventeen: a number of the female participants portrayed them selves as angles while some of the male participants represented what appears to be the devil. Given that these are typical representations ascribed to children, it seems likely that these participants still were taking up dominant discourses within society and maybe still viewed themselves as part of that social category.

It is noteworthy that in the literature 12-15 year olds are described as children when they live in suburban communities yet are described as youth by British cultural geographers when they live in the inner city. I would argue that my participants were perceived as youth for the most part in the broader community while many participated and identified with components of children's culture.

In order to delve into the term "youth culture" it is evident that one must acknowledge and explore the cultural characteristics of youth. In doing this, it is pertinent to examine both the terms culture and youth. This section will include an exploration of both these terms as well as two key agents of socialization.

In my first graduate class, "Education from a Sociological and Cultural Studies Perspective," we were asked to work in pairs to define "culture". My partner and I discussed our own understandings and shared examples of "our culture". As we circled the room and shared our definitions it was evident that our understandings of what culture actually meant was as varied as the examples we shared. Culture is one of "the two or three most complicated words in the English language" (Williams, 1976, 87). It is important to acknowledge that culture – and understandings of what culture means – are socially constructed.

As with all social constructs, power is at play. The way people interact within these cultural systems is played out by asserting power over one another. Therefore, "each culture has the ability to shape other cultures" (Goldstein, 2006, p. 4). Keeping this in mind, youth culture interacts with the mainstream in an attempt to challenge dominant forces and create change.

Sociologists have generally recognized that youth are exposed to four different agents of socialization: family, school, peer-group and mass media. For this chapter, I will be exploring two of these agents: mass media and family. The examination of media will be executed through a cultural studies framework drawing on the critical work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham through youth culture literature.

In exploring the construct of youth culture, a common understanding of the word "culture" is necessary. For this purpose, I chose to follow one developed at CCCS. Culture "refer[s] to that level at which social groups develop distinct patterns of life, and give expressive form to their social and material life-experiences. Culture is the way, the forms, in which groups 'handle' the raw materials of their social and material existence" (Clarke & Hall, 1976, p. 10).

Studies of Youth Culture

Studies in the area of youth culture from CCCS contributed to the field in a significant way; the majority of the studies employed ethnographic methods (such as the works of Stuart Hall and Paul Willis). Hall and Jefferson's edited text (1976), where the previous definition first surfaced, "laid the foundation for the recognition of youth as a social category and youth cultures as worthy of studying in their own right" (Kelly, 2006, p. 31). However, the majority of the work conducted at CCCS in the 1970s looked at white working-class males. Class was certainly the concern; racialized and gendered experiences were rarely acknowledged and for the most part were presented to assist in developing a greater understanding of classed experiences.

Over the last twenty years the focus of cultural studies in relation to youth has shifted. "[There] is no longer any predominating youth culture like there was in the 1950s, 1960s, and even the 1970s, but a simultaneous pluralism of styles" (Richard, 2006, p. 379). Instead, pluralistic categories such as racialized, gendered and sexualized have been explored in and through the category of youth. Previously, research in relation to racialized identities focused on whiteness as the norm while identifying contrasting behaviours and practices of those who did not fit the definition of white. This notion of whiteness has been altered a number of times to include and exclude various groups. However, studies of whiteness have begun to take shape, often in relation to privilege.

Research in the area of youth culture of non-white population has grown. For example, many theorists have engaged studies of hip hop culture in relation to youth with African ancestry and youth in general. The social phenomena of hip hop appears to emerge from the New York Bronx; however, closer scrutiny reveals that strong influences have come from the African American, Caribbean and Latino cultures (Kelly, 2006). Hip hop has certainly spread beyond the Bronx influencing youth cultures globally and in the context of this research, to youth living in Petite.

Originally hip hop was said to consist of four components, "(1) graffiti art, also referred to as 'graf writing'; (2) DJing ('deejaying'), also referred to as 'turntabling'; (3) MCing ('emceeing'), also referred to as 'rhyming' or 'Rapping'; and (4) b-boying, a gendered reference to the style of hip hop dance, commonly referred to as 'breakin' and 'break-dancing,' which was also popularized by 'b-girls' from its inception" (Parmar, 2006, p. 528). The dissemination of these various components within hip hop culture has been mediated by electronic forms such as television, film and the internet. These forms of media have made elements of hip hop accessible to many far-reaching communities.

White youth have become a part of this growing subculture in numerous contexts and countries. As part of becoming immersed in youth culture, language plays a significant role. For example, the term "'Wigger' or 'Wiggah' is a label considered by some as an insulting way to describe a white person who either 'acts' or 'wants to be' black ('wannabes') and by others, to be a white person who challenges the racial order and is a 'border-crosser'" (Bush, 2006, p. 365). For quite some time this label has been applied to white youth who take up hip hop culture. This was illustrated by one of the youth in my study who referred to "wanksters" as white gangsters. However, in exploring the term "wankster" in the Urban Dictionary, few definitions of the slang term overtly pointed to racialized identities. For the most part, the term was used in reference to "wannabe gangsters" (Urban Dictionary, 2007). Interestingly, the racialized aspect has aligned the term gangster with black culture so while racialization may not be as easy to decipher and analyze it is definitely central in the use of language. While this is not a refereed journal, this definition has been retrieved from a site that disseminates contemporary slang that may be accessed by far-reaching communities (often youth). This example highlights the mobility – and often adaptation – of terms from one social context to another through the use of mass media.

The act of white youth taking up hip hop has been regarded as a visible expression of their desire to break away from mainstream culture. It has also been seen as a way of appropriating black culture for the material consumption (and wealth) of white people. To problematize the messages that are transmitted and consumed, producers (typically white males) have "[determined] which messages are portrayed in mass media" and therefore taken up by white consumers (Bush, 2006, p. 368). Increasingly, academic work in youth culture has presented Aboriginal youth taking up hip hop culture throughout North America (Efron 2001, Lushua 2006).

Media Portrayals of Youth

For the most part, mass media portrays youth culture negatively: that is, youth ties to crime, teen pregnancy and substance abuse. However, adolescents do participate in healthy behaviours at higher rates than those that are unhealthy: these are rarely represented in mass media (Goldstein, 2006). Goldstein (2006) further emphasizes that those who work with youth should examine, "the roles media, music, fashion, education, family and society play in the creation of youth culture to better understand how youth culture shapes the identities of young people" (p. 3).

Adults access media representations of youth and youth also access these representations. A number of studies have identified media as the primary influence on youth as opposed to parents or schools (Parmar, 2006). This is a problematic claim; however, media does have a strong hold on many groups in society – specifically youth. Parmar (2006) encourages the exploration of critical media studies for young people themselves to better aid in understanding misrepresentations and under representations of marginalized populations.

Diversity in Families

Canadian families are diverse in terms of size and construction. Living arrangements and relationships are complex: a factor illustrated in my research data.

Some families are what sociologists refer to as nuclear[4] (one or two parents in the same household as dependent children). Other types of families include extended family households (other family members in the same household), close-knit communities (integrated families such as those who live in Hutterite colonies) and blended families (one parent who has entered into a new relationship residing in the same household as children). Aboriginal children are frequently cared for by extended family. "Some Aboriginal parents may be perceived as neglecting their children, when the parents feel they are safe and well cared for by 'their family' – that is, by uncles, grandparents, or other relatives" (Kendall *et al.*, 2000, p. 470). Mainstream media may present the diversity of family arrangements as a new phenomenon; however, family structures have always varied. Understanding the various family structures that exist currently within Canadian society is important to understanding the ways these structures socialize youth.

Diana Kendall, Jane Lothian Murray and Rick Linden (2000) highlight research that has, "[shown] that families socialize their children somewhat differently based on ethnicity and class… social class (as measured by parental occupation) is one of the strongest influences on what and how parents teach their children" (p. 117). For example, the literature indicates low-income earning parents typically instil values of "obedience and conformity" while those who work as professionals value and promote creativity and individual decision making (p. 118). As a result, children often take on the traits necessary to contribute to society in a similar way to that of their primary care-givers

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[4] In some contexts sociologists, and others who study families, use the term nuclear to refer only to heterosexual two parent households. I however refer to nuclear as all core family constructions (immediate family members only).

Traditionally there have been at least three types of power relationships in families. Most of these have been formulated under the assumption that nuclear heterosexual two-parent families are the norm. Keeping that in mind, a *patriarchal family* is one in which the eldest male is the authority: this is usually the father. In a *matriarchal family,* the eldest female (typically the mother) is the authority. *Egalitarian families* function with both parents sharing the authority and power. However, changing family structures and particularly the increased frequency of blended families have created greater complexities regarding discipline and authority (Hagan *et al.* 1987).

The number of blended families in North America is increasing dramatically. The blending of children and adult partners has resulted in complex relationships particularly where the discipline of children is concerned. Parents are often comfortable disciplining their biological children; however, doubt, confusion and stress are not uncommon when negative behaviours are portrayed by stepchildren that require adult-imposed consequences (McGee Love, 2006, p. 69). Negotiating the roles and responsibilities of additional adults is complex for both children and parents. Blended families choose to engage these challenges in varying ways resulting in diverse outcomes. However, all families do not function as patriarchal, matriarchal, or egalitarian where merged families are concerned.

Generally, media perpetuates the message that only two-parent nuclear families can challenge the ills of society and produce healthy well-adjusted adults. Many believe that schools are responsible for filling in the perceived shortfalls of parents (Goldstein, 2006). For example, there is increased emphasis on curriculum that addresses drugs, sex and other potentially risky behaviours. In Alberta a course on Career and Life Management (which addresses these activities) is a requirement for a high school diploma.

Work

In North America, most families long for a certain lifestyle often grounded in the desire to consume. To achieve this standard of living, the present economy often requires two incomes per household. There are also nuclear family structures where both parents desire to pursue a career. For two-parent nuclear families this means both parents working outside the home, and for single parents, often two jobs. "[This] reduces the amount of regular contact between parents and children" (Hoffman, 2006, p. 60).

The 2001 National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth identified that more than half of all Canadian children (between the ages of six months and five years) were in some form of childcare outside the home. In 1995 the same study reported that 42% were in childcare and the 2001 data reported 53%. Over the same time period the number of two-parent households where both parents either worked or were in school increased from 66.1% to 72.7%. In addition, the number of single parent households where the parent either worked or studied increased from 77.6% to 85.3% (Statistics Canada, 2005). I was unable to access more-recent data, but judging by the increase between 1995 and 2001 and the continued "hot economy" it is likely that the numbers have at least stayed at this level if not increased.

For the most part, families are crucial in ensuring the healthy maturation of youth. Families prepare children for entry into formal schooling environments and larger social orders in general. In terms of adolescence, this process of preparing to become members of society at large is a more gradual process than it was for many previous generations. In the past, it was presumed that children would follow their parents into the marketplace. Work was seen as a place of transition for youth who would take the place of their parents in society (Herr, 2006).

Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined some of the relevant literature on the topic of youth culture. It also includes a substantial portion on family structures and diversity in families and I felt that it was important that I understand the various types of families that the research participants belong to. Also, as one of the most foundational agents of socialization, the family plays a key role in shaping youth and therefore has some influence on youth culture. These ideas will be taken up in later chapters where I present the data and discuss it. The next chapter will outline my research methodology and explain why I took up specific methods while choosing not to employ others.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Figure 6: Bad Day

This chapter, and the next, will identify my research methods and present my methodology. This chapter explores my methodological orientations including epistemological and ontological understandings of my research questions. The critical works of Michael Apple (2000), and Kinchloe and McLaren (2005) have directly influenced the ways I now view – and question – power relationships within Canadian society. Throughout my course work it became clear that my proposed research project would be influenced by both critical theory and cultural studies.

My Methodological Journey

The core goal of this research was to explore the participants' engagement with and production of social spaces. This included an exploration of their interaction with one-another, family and authority in relation to common social space. To do this in a way that would expose rich multilayered data where I could explore understandings and meanings it was important that I use a qualitative approach. A qualitative methodology also made it possible to explore topics rather than test a hypothesis and enabled an open system rather than setting controls and contrasting this work to others. Perhaps one of the most valid reasons for using a qualitative approach is that it recognizes subjectivity and finds ways to work it into the study rather than claiming objectivity. Objectivity would be impossible given my history with the community, school and subject matter.

Given that the goals of this research were linked to understandings and perceptions of community and social spaces it also made sense to engage these broad overarching questions through an ethnographic study. This made it possible to explore my pre-existing assumptions throughout the duration while questioning understandings (both my own and those of the participants). This naturally led to a contextual understanding as opposed to generalizable accounts.

A qualitative research framework results in data that is “rich in description of people, places, and conversations” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 2). Questionnaires could provide numerical indicators in relation to specific research questions; however, I was concerned that this would not reflect the nuances of how the students perceive and engage their world. Further, with qualitative work, “research questions are not framed by operationalizing variables; rather, they are formulated to investigate topics in all their complexity, in context” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 2). My aim was to embrace a methodology that would provide opportunities for the potential multiplicities to evolve naturally through the data generation and to be exposed through analysis.

Critical Ethnography

As I have highlighted previously, critical theory created the space where I was first able to uncover my research interests. Kinchloe and McLaren (2000) via Madison (2005) argue that the most credible method to engage critical theory is critical ethnography. Therefore, to truly understand the theoretical impact, it is important for the researcher (and those impacted by the research) to engage and interact with method. When we act out critical theory the result is critical ethnography: foundational to both is an exploration of power. In this research, one of the primary goals is to explore how power impacts the participants and their understandings of society. The goal is to reach a deep understanding of the situation that will in some way serve both the academic community and populations that are not dominant (Wainwright, 1997, p. 3).

Critical ethnography falls within the realm of qualitative research. As such it is ideographic rather than nomothetic: interested in developing an understanding of the particular rather than making grand claims of explanation based on generalizations, and inductive rather than deductive. The role of the qualitative researcher can be complex and it varies depending on the methods applied. According to Fine (1994) there are three possible standpoints that the qualitative researcher can take. The *ventriloquist* researcher passes on the message of the participants while the ethnographers voice attempts to be silent in the work. The *activism* researcher works to disrupt hegemonic practices and advocates for the marginalized offering alternatives. The researcher who employs *voices* acts and writes in a way that carries the message of the research participants to the forefront in opposition to the assertions of the dominant discourse. "The position of the ethnographer is vaguely present but not addressed" (p. 17). Therefore, as an ethnographer, the key goal is to encourage and support the voices of participants.

Ethnography is used as a mode of investigation because "studying a phenomenon over time is not simply to record changes in its appearance or phenomenal form, but to reveal the nature of the relationship between the phenomenon's appearance and its underlying essence" (Wainwright, 1997, 3-4). I have chosen critical ethnography because where, "Conventional ethnography describes what is; critical ethnography asks what could be" (Thomas, 1993, 4).

On the surface, it appears that the researcher who chooses to engage with qualitative research "becomes an impartial reporter enabling informants to express their own definition of the situation" (Wainwright, 1997, 2). However, in critical ethnographic work, it is the researcher's responsibility to examine the data with the historical and social consciousness that that has been gained through theory and ethnographic encounters with the research participants. "The objective is still to access the subjective beliefs of the people being studied, but rather than accepting such beliefs at face value they are examined critically in the context of a broader historical and structural analysis" (Wainwright, 1997, 2-3).

"One of the central ideas guiding critical ethnography is that social life is constructed in contexts of power" (Noblit, 2004, 184). According to Wainwright (1997) "The objective of critical social research is to make such oppressive structures overt in order that they might be challenged" (p. 4). In relation to this research, a key goal and reason for using critical ethnography, is to employ the voices[5] of the participants in an investigation of the social and educational relationships in play. The following transcript excerpts are from two separate interviews: they are two examples of how critical social research methods can amplify student voices in order to articulate perceptions of oppression:

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[5] Including the various modes with which they communicated.

Interview One:
Sarah: Tell me about this self-portrait you made with your friend.
Terry: We called our picture "War at School". School's hard – the war is against the school.

Interview Two:
Sarah: When do you go to the water fountain?
Wolf: Wherever I'm in the hallways. I ask to go get a drink and then I go fool around… [usually in the] computer lab.
Sarah: What do you like about doing that?
Wolf: It's fun; you don't have to do work.

The arts-informed context of this research created a framework for both the participants and researcher to communicate (speak and hear) in a variety of ways. The arts-informed context created a context for non-traditional methods of inquiry to be utilized. In turn, this created an environment for non-traditional forms of knowledge and understanding to be shared; ultimately adolescent perspectives were embraced and amplified through the varied methods which were employed. In the previous transcript excerpts, both of the participants took this opportunity to address the resistance they felt in relation to formal education – one through physically getting out of class and the other through artwork depicting conflict and confrontation with the system.

As well as the use of multiple methods, it became evident that my understandings of knowledge – and one's ability to access knowledge –was dependent on how the participants perceived my position (insider or outsider) in the school and community. Through an exploration of feminist methods, I was able to understand the notions of the shifting social understandings of insiders and outsiders. It is through recognition of this that Naples (2003) identifies the following methodological points, "as ethnographers we are never fully outside or inside the 'community'; our relationship to the community is never expressed in general terms but is constantly being negotiated and renegotiated in particular everyday interactions; and these interactions are themselves enacted in shifting relationships among community residents" (p. 49). I knew it would be important for me to explore both how I felt, and how others perceived me, as a person in the community. Exploring notions of community, without acknowledging how perceptions the participants held of me could affect the interactions and outcomes of the work, seemed naïve.

The benefits of insider research have been questioned and outcomes vary from site to site. However, in the community where I chose to conduct my research, I have significant pre-existing ties and it was important for me to acknowledge them in order to be seen as an open, honest and trust-worthy researcher in this context. "Holding some degree of insider status can offer important additional benefits and possibilities, most notably with respect to generating of a relaxed atmosphere conducive to open conversation and willingness to disclose" (Hodkinson, 2005, 139).

My Positionality

As an adult re-entering my home town I felt that it would benefit me to explore community interaction on my own. It was important to attempt to become an insider not just for interviewing purposes but also to attempt to make sense of the data in a way that reflects the principles of critical ethnography. This process felt quite natural, likely because I had once felt like an insider and could relate my childhood interactions to those I experienced when I returned as well as reflecting on the ways my parents were members of the adult community.

When invited to go curling I accepted, ate at the local restaurant, participated in a ladies crafting evening and I played cards at the seniors centre. At these social activities, not only did I encounter adults but I also found some of the students taking part. They were at the curling and skating rinks, and I saw a number of them working (and shopping) at local businesses.

In contrast, I encountered situations that were difficult for me to deal with. The socio-economic disparity, racism, substance abuse, sometimes difficult home situations, gendered and homophobic comments were overwhelming at times. These were visible in the school as well as the broader community. Some of the students were obviously going through very difficult times, and others appeared to embrace – or be unaware of – their positions of power. For example, in days where students worked collaboratively, the social discourse was of particular interest to me. The following excerpt has been taken from my research journal:

Tuesday February 21, 2006

> One group of students from another grade (all "white") were working on a project for social studies. They were chatting about bingo and playing the slots with obviously over-exaggerated Aboriginal accents, and were using slang that some local Aboriginal people use (i.e. mah, cha etc.). One student said that if they (Aboriginal people) had more money they would put it in the slot machines. He went on in this accent saying, "If I weren't so broke I'd be able to gamble all I wanted". This conversation took place openly and the response, for the most part, was laughter from those who were nearby – I considered interjecting in an effort to dissect and highlight the racist comments. However, I pulled out my journal and began writing about it. When one of the students said "fucken" with the same accent I took this opportunity to comment on the discourse. He apologized for the word and I

> said that I was frankly commenting on the group discussion and how the words and assumptions were insulting and hurtful (also to me, as a white woman). They said nothing and went back to work.

As the previous entry suggests, returning to the place where I last lived with my parents provided learning opportunities that I did not anticipate – particularly in terms of my relation to the community. Both my mom and dad had retired and had since moved away. I was encouraged to get involved in the staff and community activities. I forgot how busy rural life can be when you are a part of a community. In an attempt to feel more like an insider, I made an effort to live life as my mom had in this context. She was most definitely an "insider" and I wanted to understand her experiences; I thought that they would help me understand some of the inter-personal and group dynamics and would enable the participants to view me as part of their community.

It was important for me to explore how my attempt to become an insider could change the power dynamics in the school and the research project. "Positionality is vital because it forces us to acknowledge our own power, privilege, and biases just as we denounce the power structures that surround our subjects" (Madison, 2005, 14). Initially it was evident that I was perceived as a teacher by students. In the school there were administrators, teachers, office staff, support staff and an Aboriginal liaison officer. However, as time passed the dynamic shifted and even though I was an adult, the students knew that I was there primarily to learn from them. There were still some tensions and uncertainties regarding conduct and the ability to trust, but generally, we communicated with ease.

My role

I submersed myself in the school culture volunteering in the junior high classes and covering academic math classes when needed. It was a wonderful way to get to know the research participants as much as possible prior to the interview process and data analysis. This gave me an opportunity to guide the interview with some knowledge of their inter-peer relationships and social positioning within the classroom, school and community as a whole.

I was introduced with my University of Alberta affiliation and I tried to share as much of my life story as seemed manageable and applicable in my five minute introduction. This of course included my pre-service experiences and how I came to my research question. The students were not alone in their perception of me as teacher. On my first day, I was approached by the administration to cover academic math classes because my bachelor of education specialization was secondary math. I felt it was important to be open with the students: I taught math class highlighting the fact that I was volunteering. I am unable to identify the consequences of this action. However, it was important that I serve the school in my being there which included filling in where needed. The interactions were positive and covering other classes provided space for more interaction and reflection – often in terms of the school and not just the participants.

This disproportionate power was highlighted for me throughout this process. I thought of my classmates who were equally as successful academically in the earlier grades. I considered how many had attended post-secondary and how each of our lives had turned out differently (as well as the similarities) Bourdeau's notions of capital – particularly cultural capital – were at the forefront. In terms of cultural indicators of accessing post-secondary, my only academic hurdles were that I grew up in a rural community and that I was female. These two hurdles applied to more than half of the school population and many faced other more extreme indicators or challenges as well.

Arts-Informed Methods

While developing a research plan, my supervisor suggested that I read sociological studies that used a variety of research methods. Nora Rathzel's (2000) work with a group of 160 teen-aged girls in Hamburg, Germany peaked my interest. Her work explores fear and fearlessness with relation to space and is driven by questions concerning her participants' relationships with one another and how they interpret and respond to safety and danger. Through a variety of research methods in her study, she asks her participants to make sense of their lives. Her participants were invited to take part in many arts-informed methods including fashion, writing fiction, audio and video diary entries as well as photography. As a result, the girls were able to express their fear, or lack thereof, in a variety of creative and detailed ways. Seeing the clear similarities in terms of what her work produced and what I hoped to explore in a smaller way, the benefits of using at least one of these methods seemed apparent.

According to Prosser (2003), the two key arguments used against image-based research are procedural reactivity and personal reactivity (p. 104-5). Procedural reactivity is when procedures employed in research affect behaviours and therefore the data. A common example of that is how behaviours often change when people know that they are being observed say in a one-way-mirrored observation room.

Personal reactivity is the impact of the personal actions and characteristics of the researcher. In this situation the researcher is unable or unwilling to become self-conscious and explore the researcher's role in and impact on the research. However, when insiders explore their space through image-based research they are often aware, and act critically, in both of these areas. The goal of photographic inquiry is to perform situated insider research: that is, research where the participants are asked to document their responses research question via photography.

The active engagement of participants (particularly youth) as researchers is a necessary component of research where exploring their understandings is forefront. The use of photography encourages youth to explore their perceptions of space and to capture it, or representations of it, through the lens. Images are not subject to the confines of written or formal verbal communication (Schratz & Steiner-Löffler, 2003). Therefore, it is possible for complex ideas to be presented visually with greater ease than spoken or written forms of communication. Prosser (2003) tells us that "Images are, by their nature, ambiguous and do not in themselves convey meanings which are supplied serendipitaly by those who perceive them" (p. 98). This was one of the reasons why it seemed necessary to discuss the photographs and other student-generated works in an interview format. The images were used not in place of text, but to create a "context within which to talk and to write" (Wiedel, 1995, p. 77).

The Role of Arts-Informed Research in this Context

In terms of this research, the arts provided a space to begin exploring my research questions and the related topics. The primary purpose for using arts-informed methods was to create a rich context within which to conduct individual semi-structured interviews. As shown in the following figure, I developed my semi-structured interview questions using the arts-informed methods, which are elaborated on in subsequent sections.

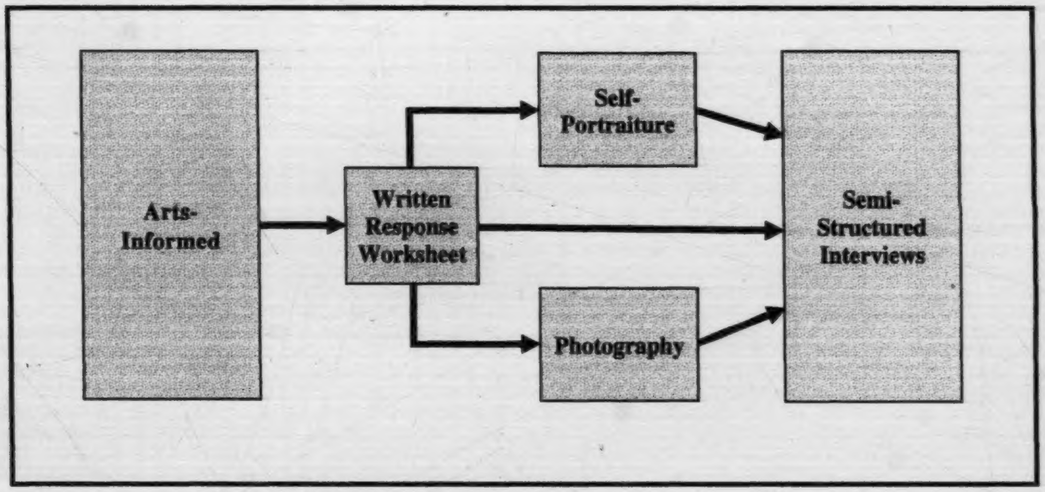
Arts-Informed
Written Response Worksheet
Self-Portraiture
Photography
Semi-Structured Interviews

Figure 7: Arts-Informed Process

Chapter Summary

This chapter has addressed my understandings of knowledge in relation to this study. I have also identified my positionality, my role in the research, and the role the arts have played in this throughout this project. The next chapter focuses more specifically on the undertaking of the research and application of methods. It will also include an audit trail that highlights how I engaged with the research participants and embedded myself in the research site.

Chapter Four: Research Design

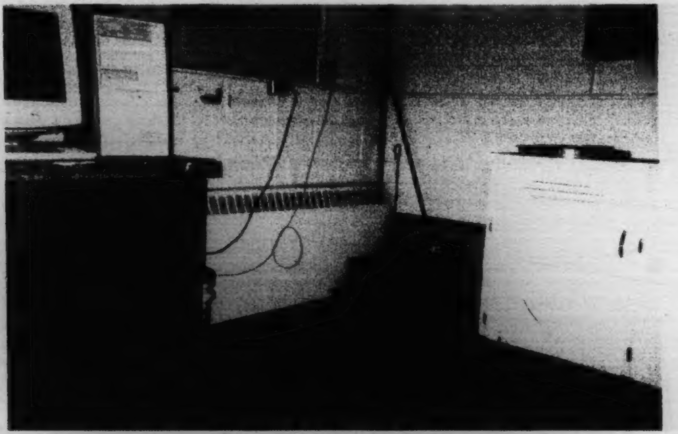

Figure 8: Creepy Room

The previous chapter identified my role in relation to the research and identified some of my understandings of research. This chapter identifies how I applied methods in this research project. It also includes examples of how the research participants and I communicated and interacted outside of the formal research site of the school.

Doing the Research

Gaining Access

"Important steps in formulating any study involve identifying, locating, and gaining access to an appropriate research site and the sources of data it can yield" (Prosser & Schwartz, 2003, p. 119). Gaining access to the research site was fairly easy; once my ethics application was approved I contacted the Principal, a former teacher and administrator of mine for help in establishing connections with the secondary teachers in the school. The Principal agreed to house my research project in the school and assured me that there would be a willing teacher. Days later I heard from the grade seven and nine humanities teacher and was immediately welcomed to participate in her classes, conduct my research project using class time and was assured that she would help me find lodgings. Her volunteering to help with finding lodgings was a relief since my parents had relocated elsewhere in their retirement. However, I was unsure of how my rooming with someone who was directly associated with the school would be perceived by the students and other community members.

The offers to room rolled in and I accepted an invitation from the family with whom I had the longest standing relationship. This couple had been a part of my life for years. Their eldest child was a close friend when I was in school and her mother and mine were still in regular social contact. I enthusiastically accepted and then informed them of my extended (two month) stay. I began preparing for my travels; the preparation was minimal at first.

Returning to the school brought back a number of memories and highlighted my “insider/outsider” status. For example, on the first day back to school, my “adoptive mom”, Rose (a teacher assistant) and I parked in the staff parking lot and headed toward the closest door where the children were in line. I immediately wondered if it was appropriate for me to walk by the children and enter, but other parents, teachers and school staff walked in at the same time as I did, so I knew that it was permitted. I then proceeded to the boot rack where I realized that I had forgotten to bring a second pair of shoes – indoor shoes – to wear in the halls and classrooms. I knocked the snow off the soles as best I could and placed the shoes on the top rack, where there were no reserved spaces. A number of school rules came flooding back:

no hats indoors; only enter and exit the school through the door assigned to your class division[6]; and all visitors must report to the school office. I went to the office for advice on how to find the teacher I would be working with.

Research Participants

The week before I returned to Petite, the host teacher proposed that I work with her grade seven class. My previous experience with pre-service teaching in a junior high gave me a general idea of the age group and their potential ties to youth culture. However, this was a rural environment, and it had been some time since I was their age and a student in this school.

There were 23 students registered in the class: 12 females and 11 males. However, it was rumored that two of the female students were transferring to the band-run school; shortly thereafter it was confirmed and a third female student also transferred. This left 9 female and 11 male students. To ascertain further demographic information I spoke with the students and staff and asked the students directly to tell me how they defined themselves. The majority were 12 years old but ranged to 14. Most were born in one of the two neighbouring hospitals but some had moved to the area as recently as the year prior. Primary lodgings for the students included: Petite, the adjoining First-Nation (Fish Lake), the Lake's Edge First Nation (approximately 25 kilometers away), a nearby community that had lost its school and farms[7]. Consequently, most students commuted to school on school busses. As is indicative of their lodgings, students self-identified as white, Aboriginal (including those who chose to identify as Status Indian and Métis) and others did not disclose their ethnicity.

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[6] There is one door for grades K-3, another for 4-6 and a third for 7-12. The forth entrance, main entrance, is reserved for school employees and visitors.

[7] Some of these farms are situated in the valley where the first white settlers to the area homesteaded.

There was also diversity in terms of family living situations. These included living in: two-parent nuclear homes, predominantly (or exclusively) with one parent, both grandparents and parents, as well as structures with partners of one legal parent/guardian. During the time I spent with this group it also became evident that there was diversity in terms of socio-economics status, although the variance was not significant.

Participant Selection

For the majority of the methods employed, the entire grade seven class participated. All students took part in the creation of art (self-portraiture and photography). However, it was not feasible (in terms of time-restraints and the amount of data that would be generated) to carry out the individual semi-structured interviews with all of the participants. I invited eight of the 20 to participate in the final portion of the data generation – individual student art-elicited semi-structured interviews.

I used purposive sampling to select students who would represent the diverse subjects I identified previously. There were equal numbers of female and male participants, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, children of various family compositions and the participants lived in a variety of places: farm, anchorage, village and reserve. I also had to consider who had returned by earlier letter of introduction quickly and with little need for me to remind them to do so. Of the eight students I invited, seven returned their parental consent forms with enough time to conduct at least two interviews. After verbally explaining the purpose of the interviews to the eighth student he also returned his permission slip. Unfortunately, my pre-determined date of departure did not allow time for a formal interview. To protect the anonymity of the participants I have used multiple pseudonyms for each of them.

Applying Specific Arts-Informed Methods

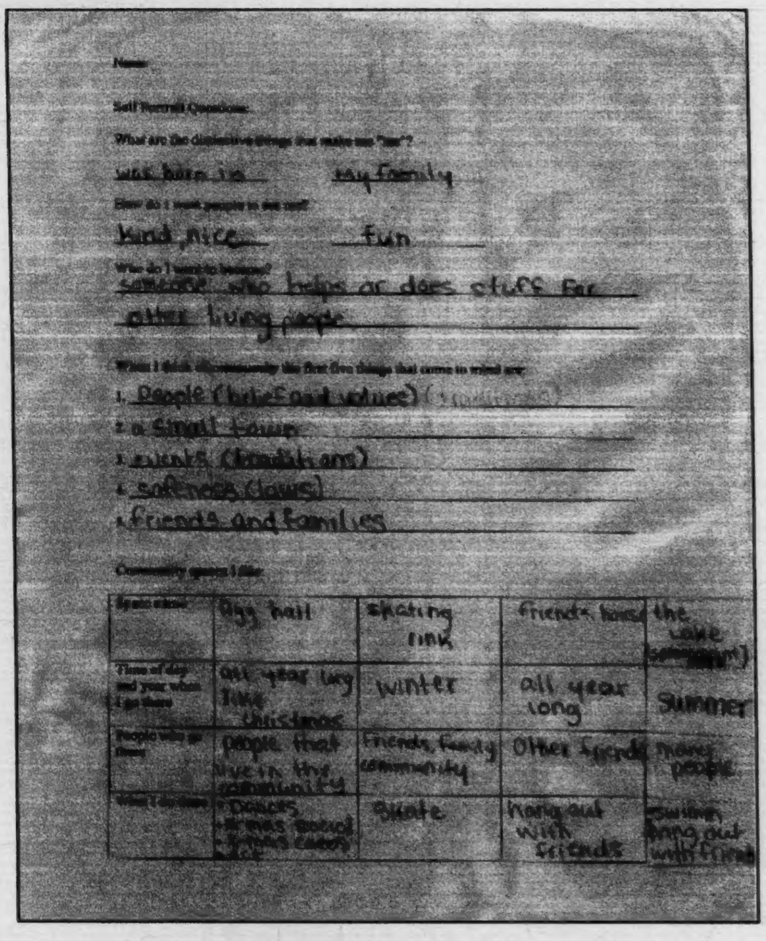
In the data generation portion of this research, the participants were asked to explore their understandings of space and community. One of the first activities the students engaged in was creating a self-portrait. Understanding how the students hoped to be perceived, and asking students to create self-representations, provided a space to learn about the participants early in my time on site. The use of art also created a relaxing and engaging classroom environment which was important in developing rapport.

Figure 9: Self-Portrait

I presented a variety of methods and encouraged the students to either follow one of them or to create their own medium of self-representation. This activity proved to be challenging for some students. As a result, the classroom teacher and I created a written response worksheet to help the students articulate what it was that they wanted their portraits to express. The methods of creating self-portraits included: photo-manipulation, photo montages of themselves as someone in pop-culture, and life-sized mosaics (using blocks of colour torn from magazines). The image on the previous page is an example of a self-portrait. This life-sized mosaic was transferred to cardboard making it possible to prop it up in a desk (see figure 9). Upon close examination, a Chevrolet logo was visible just below the student's arm. These symbols pointed to how the student self-identified and how he wanted others to see him. This project was quite labour intensive and a group came together to create this one image.

Written Response Worksheet

Initially I created a written response worksheet (with help from the classroom teacher) for organizational purposes alone. I felt that the worksheet would ensure that the participants consider foundational probes to the process of creating a self-portrait as well as ensure that they considered the spaces to be photographed before they began capturing them. However, the completed worksheets (or questionnaires) helped me identify preliminary themes and provided another form of communication for the students to express their perceptions of community and space. The participants and I referred to their responses in the interviews and this is demonstrated on the following page.



Name:

Self Portrait Questions:

What are the distinctive things that make me "me"?

was born in — my family

How do I want people to see me?

kind, nice — fun

Who do I want to become?

someone who helps or does stuff for other living people

When I think of community the first five things that come to mind are:

1. People (beliefs and values) ([illegible])
2. a small town
3. events (traditions)
4. safeness (laws)
5. friends and families

Community spaces I like:

Space name	Big hall	skating rink	friends house	the lake ([illegible])
Time of day and year when I go there	all year long like christmas	winter	all year long	Summer
People who go there	people that live in the community	Friends, family community	Other friends	many people
What I do there	- Dances - [illegible] - [illegible] - [illegible]	Skate	hang out with friends	swiming, hang out with friends

Figure 10: Green Sheet

Sarah: What did you mean by safeness or laws when you responded to, "When I think of community the first five things that come to mind are:" on the worksheet:

Marissa: Because you live in a small community you probably know everyone so you feel real safe because you know them and you know they won't hurt you. And if you live here you know the police officers in our town. If you don't know them it's kind of weird. And it's safe and there are good laws like the bike helmet rule. And it's really safe.

Sarah: And what about the cities then? Is it safe or not safe?

Marissa: Well it's safe but not as safe as out in a small town. In Petite you can be in two places at once because it's so small. In a city it's different. So I guess they would have more police officers but still you wouldn't know everyone.

Photography

Both the students and I took a number of photographs while I was in Petite. I found this process created another space for reflection. The majority of the landscapes I captured were of spaces that made me feel at home and others represented the developmental changes that had occurred during the nine years I had been gone.

Figure 11: Going to the Mill

For example, as the photograph shows, I took pictures of areas that were once densely populated with coniferous trees and were now stripped. I was also fascinated with the logging trucks as well as the commercial and industrial developments that are approximately 50 kilometres away.

The entire grade seven class was asked to select their own visual representations of spaces to which they felt a positive connection and others to which they felt averse. The student-generated photographs were often of objects that represented places in which they found community. I did not anticipate this type of response but it ended up being very appropriate and often signalled economic privilege and objects with which the participants identified and wanted to be associated with. At this point, it became evident that the photographs communicated a visual cue of what they would like to discuss and created a starting place for the interviews.

Figure 12: My 22

Wiedel (1995) tells us that, "the photographer, like the ethnographer, derives authority from being a trusted witness, but the photographer (especially the private photograph) draws its warrant from its relationship to memory and the reconstruction of history" (p. 73). I found this quote even more moving after conducting my interviews. The photographs the participants selected often held emotional significance. However, the depth to which they communicated this emotional connection pointed to their memories in terms of objects, spaces, and those with which they felt a connection. The photograph above is an example of a photograph taken by Luke, one of the participants that elicited an emotional response, "[When I see this picture I think] of being with my grandpa, out in the bush where it's real quiet." This also demonstrates how "meaning" is contextual and changing.

Semi-structured Interviews

One of the key goals of the research method was to enable an environment where a fluid conversation relating to the themes and questions would be possible. These areas of conversation included: gender, relationships with adults or authority, perceived responsibilities and freedoms, ethnicity and racialization, border-crossing[8] and shared spaces. I attempted to listen sympathetically in order to encourage open-ended and varied responses among participants in order to create space for a comparative analysis between transcripts. The significance of specific responses was often difficult to perceive in the moment; however, many responses presented greater clarity when I listened to the interviews and later transcribed the text. All of the initial interviews were followed with an opportunity to clarify responses and to expand topics with the participants both formally via follow-up interviews and informally during our school interaction.

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[8] Between the reserve and the village limits.

To develop a deeper understanding of the participants' comments in the interviews I employed Madison's (2005) suggestion of attempting to "patiently probe topics" (p. 33). During the interview, and artistic explorations, moments and topics surfaced that left me with more questions. I urged students to communicate something about their work through an accompanying artist statement. I shared examples of artist statements so the participants could use them as a template but not feel that they had to be overly-structured. Some students outlined the process they followed in creating the self-portrait, and painting a frame to display one selected photograph for presentation, while others wrote about themselves.

The interview also created a space for students to talk freely about what it was they were trying to convey through their art. In the interview there were times where I felt an internal pressure to act in place of a counsellor or journalist. However, I felt that it was important to urge the participants to delve deeper without making them feel uncomfortable or pressured to do so. At the beginning of the interview I told each student that if something surfaced in the interview that made me concerned for their well-being that I would discuss a plan to resolve the situation with them and proceed accordingly. This was not necessary, but it was reassuring to both the participants and me to know that we could communicate openly and any necessary actions would be in their best interest.

I also reminded the participants at the beginning of each interview that they had a right to refuse answering any question or to withdraw at any time. It was more important to me that I respect their discomfort with certain topics and urge them to share their understandings at a level in which they felt safe. I found it important to consult my supervisor after the first interview seeking advice on how to follow-up and encourage the participant to expand in certain areas: receiving advice from an experienced researcher (in relation to my transcripts) proved to be very helpful.

There were times where I felt that the participants were not entirely open or honest with me. However, Madson (2005) acknowledged the possibility that participants may not respond honestly because of "gender, race, age or nationality, or to cultural civilities, habits, and taboos" (p. 35). This is of course true in terms of the participants' positionality but also in terms of how they perceived my gender, ethnicity, age etcetera as well as my political beliefs. There were times where I tried to probe further but felt resistance from the participants to expose their underlying beliefs and biases. When I felt this resistance I typically moved to a new area and tried to approach the topic again at a later point which was helpful in reducing the tension around certain topics.

Student perspectives and understandings of the works they created were explored through individual semi-structured interviews with seven students. I chose to conduct individual interviews to aide in the anonymity of responses, to ensure that students who were perceived to be quiet would have an opportunity to share their perceptions, and to provide expanded opportunities for particular questions that related to individual students and their responses to earlier questions. In addition, this format enabled me to ask students to describe their understandings of specific situations and compare their interpretations of the same event without having their responses biased by the perceptions of others. For example, the following two excerpts from transcripts are student-descriptions of the same event.

Sarah: Tell me a little about where you sit when you attend school assemblies like the one earlier this week.
Shelly: I just sat with my friends. Guys are usually on that side and the girls are on the other side. It's just me, my cousins and my friends… [the girls are] kind of divided up because [three girls are] always together so they always sit by themselves… they play video games and everything. Those three are grouped by themselves and then me and my friends and cousins [are one group]. And the guys are by themselves… in one big group.

Sarah: So tell me about choosing seats at school assemblies.
Billy: [I sat there because] that's where my friends were. There's [the five of us guys] in one group. And there's another group of guys. Then across from all of us there's all the girls… [in] one big group.

Gendered friendship patterns were expressed in multiple ways by a number of the participants. Some of these will be highlighted in the following data chapters.

Prior to each interview, I gathered the materials the participants created (written response sheet, self-portrait(s), the photographs (approximately six) that the individual student selected out of their 27 exposures, and the photograph they chose to frame and artist statements). A semi-structured format for the interviews allowed me to access students' "ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words, rather than in the words of the researcher" (Reinharz, 1992, p. 19).

As a first-time researcher it was beneficial to have multiple resources that the students created throughout my time in their class to aid in guiding the conversation to topics of further investigation and to engage in smooth dialogue. The power disjuncture (researcher/participant) was reduced to some extent by asking the students to direct the discussion by speaking about their materials. The use of their objects in relation to the interview structure also created more flexibility in the order of addressing topics.

I also asked the participants to explain their understandings of events and leisure time (like the excerpts above referring to school assemblies). During this process some participants referred to their photographs and self-portraits and others asked for paper to help map (visually depict) their relationships with space and one-another. Encouraging multiple modes of communicating responses to the research questions, and creating materials throughout the ethnographic process, proved to result in rich data – ultimately in the form of the interview transcripts.

Initially I had anticipated conducting one 60 minute interview with the possibility of one follow-up interview. I was glad to have the opportunity to interview students during class time (especially after learning that most travel to and from school on the bus, making interviews outside of the school day next to impossible). However, this resulted in the constraint of less time for each interview because of the way their timetables were structured. Consequently, each student agreed to a minimum of two 30-40 minute interviews with the possibility of a follow-up interview.

In the first interview I attempted to take notes (in addition to recording the interview) to ensure that I would return to topics of interest. However, I found that limiting eye-contact and writing damaged the rapport. All of the participants agreed to have their interviews digitally-recorded which meant that I was able to focus on the dialogue and body-language of the participants. When I first posed the question of recording the interview some students asked me to clarify who would have access to the recording. I assured them that only my supervisor and I would listen to the recordings. I assured them that I would keep their recorded interviews secure and that I would be transcribing them individually. One of the unanticipated benefits to recording the interviews digitally was the place it created at the beginning to the interview to discuss various forms of technology and create a climate of mutual conversation and interest.

I also explained that I would be using pseudonyms and that access to the intact transcripts would be limited to my supervisor and me. Some of the students resisted the idea of using pseudonyms wanting their names to be displayed in my thesis; however, once I explained the university policies around research with human subjects and advised them that this may not be how they feel in the future they understood the purpose of pseudonyms. I also verbally explained that each student had the right to withdraw in part (or completely) from the project at any time without explanation or penalty.

Data Selection

Although all of the students in the class participated in the arts components of the research it was not necessary to use all of the projects for the purposes of this thesis. I asked eight students (and their guardians) permission to share their pieces through this thesis and my academic presentations. The remainder of the artwork has been fully included in this thesis, although it does inform and deeper my overall understanding of the thesis. As a class, we hosted an art gallery during parent-teacher interviews and a number of the students attended and invited their friends and family to see their work as well.

Having been in the community for a substantial period of time, there was a massive amount of data. For the purposes of this work, I have set a great deal of it aside. I have chosen to focus on the art-pieces of the participants who were asked to participate in the semi-structured interviews, these participants' written response worksheets and the transcripts from their interviews. With regard to my ethnography journal, I have limited the data to the entries that relate directly to moments I asked the participants about in our interviews.

Data analysis

As I mentioned previously, the participants agreed to have their interviews digitally recorded. This was helpful in terms of being able to identify specific phrases that were emphasized and helped me categorize sections of the conversations. This proved to be time-consuming in terms of transcribing each of the interviews, but it helped me become familiar with the data and nuances through the need to pay close attention while transcribing. It was through this process that themes began to emerge. Likely, this inductive process resulted in themes that may not have been as evident had I used another method, particularly quantitative methods.

I engaged the data through a thematic analysis lens. I teased the data apart by looking for commonalities and anomalies in terms of student responses and statements of generalization. After each interview I recorded my initial responses in my journal and identified questions that would help probe specific areas that were identified in the interview that I had not addressed previously. This information helped inform the structure for the follow-up interview as well as those that I would still be conducting with other participants. I did this without disclosing how I specifically became interested in topics that were participant-generated, again to protect the anonymity of the participants.

At first, finding evident themes seemed like a massive task. There appeared to be themes within themes and data that I had identified as belonging to one category seemed more relevant in another. Bodgan and Biklen (2003) proved to be a wonderful resource in that it helped me identify relevant overarching codes for the data. Rather than re-reading the transcripts in their entirety, with guidance from my supervisor, I opted to identify six broad themes and slot the data into the themes rather than engage it in the opposite order. At this point the most prevalent themes began to show more precedence. These were influenced by my positionality, the specific experiences the participants and I shared. However, acknowledging that there were several different directions that this work could have moved in, my interpretation of the data is simply one of many other possible interpretations. I believe that the codes Fontana and Frey identify in the Bodgan and Biklen (2003) text helped me expose themes that the students urged me to explore through their artwork, daily interactions and perhaps most specifically through our one-on-one interviews.

Validity and Reliability

Qualitative work generally departs from positions of objectivity and the role of the researcher as neutral, encouraging the reader to engage with it in non-traditional ways. It is still important to engage data that is trustworthy and distinct and keeping this in mind it was important to explore multiple methods in order to limit the distortion of my personal biases while acknowledging my positionality. Lather (1991) identifies: triangulation, construct validity, face validity and catalytic validity as for methods to ensure that qualitative work is valid and reliable.

In this work I focused specifically on methods that could generate triangulation in terms of the data. Triangulation calls the researcher to explore varying types of data. In this case my methods included: interviews, observation, art pieces and written response worksheets. These methods are diverse data gathering tools that worked together to present data that is rich, complex, and multilayered.

Having grown up in the environment I would be exploring laid a foundation upon which I would be weighing the data. I also conducted a literature review before entering the site. This included reading historical documents on the specific territory and the village itself. Being a part of the school community made it possible to engage school staff, multiple classes, and the specific participants in various ways (observer, participant, classroom helper, teacher etc). It was also very helpful going over the artwork with the classroom teacher and student aids in an effort to hear their initial responses and analysis. I also shared copies of the artwork and interview transcripts with my supervisor which created a space to share my preliminary analysis as well as seek guidance regarding future directions to explore in future interactions.

Construct validity is a process of self-reflection through which the researcher engages theory, the researcher's understandings (personal experiences) and participants' narratives concurrently. This constant reflection created a space where substantiating evidence, as well as anomalies to the majority experience or theoretical beliefs, were highlighted and could be explored. This process naturally encourages critical interaction and room for theory to evolve.

A primary goal in terms of catalytic validity is to create focus and energy through the act of conducting the research itself. Through the research process, the participants should be empowered and ascertain and assert their individual skills. Ultimately, catalytic validity encourages change and growth (Stiles, 1999). In this context this was attained through the acquisition of new skills (arts-informed) and through the opportunity to express personal understandings through art and conversation which also translated to in-class activities.

Lather (1991) argues that face validity is more complex than was previously claimed. She makes a case for it by asserting that it is closely tied to construct validity in that preliminary themes and findings are weighed against previous experiences and understandings. Therefore, exploring findings through the concept of face validity provides another layer of criteria that is beneficial when assessing data but is not sufficient on its own (Lather, 1991).

Presenting data on sensitive issues such as racialization, class and rural life has been difficult in that I have concern that my presentations might be taken up in an effort to perpetuate one-dimensional notions. The participants referred to the themes I have identified multiple times in their interviews. Nonetheless, this was a small qualitative sample, and I would not attempt to expand these understandings to a broader population. In qualitative research in particular, it is important that readers attempt to make connections to their own situations rather than make assumptions that the data can be generalized to a broad population (Kelly, 1995).

Research Ethics

The ethics review process helped me consider a number of challenges that would be encountered throughout the data generation and dissemination processes. Of particularly interest was protecting the anonymity of the participants (who are minors). As a precaution, the participants were advised that images where people were identifiable would not be used in the analysis or presentation of the research. Therefore, the images that would be included in the formal research should be of places (if people were in the images their faces should not be included in the photograph). Along a similar thread, I used pseudonyms in both my journal and the interview transcripts. As I have mentioned previously in the participant selection section of this chapter, I have used random multiple pseudonyms for the participants. I have also replaced the name of the community and school where the research was conducted, as well as the names of the neighbouring communities, with pseudonyms for the community to add another layer of separation and protection for the participants.

In the semi-structured interviews I attempted to build rapport as guided by the attributes outlined by Madison (2005). First, positive naivety was a presupposition of mine. I did enter the space as a former student but the students also knew that I had been away from the community for nearly ten years and that I was trained as a teacher. There was a delicate negotiation of insider and outsider that appeared to be visible in our one-on-one interactions. From my initial introduction, it was important to me that I build rapport as quickly as possible and that the students see me as a trusted ally through my recognition of their positions as research participants[9] in the work. A key goal of the research was to access their understandings.

Building rapport proved to be challenging at times. There were points where I felt that I had to choose between building empathy as a researcher and intervening as an individual who saw injustice. There were times where I felt that the participants' behaviour was inappropriate and that it required adult intervention. One example of this was highlighted earlier in the journal excerpt in the subsection "my positionality". When racist comments were spoken in the classroom I intervened. This action could have influenced the way I was perceived in the school environment, and ultimately the way the individual research participants responded to my queries and probes.

Ethical Issues and Photography

The use of photography, in particular, brought about another set of interesting ethical questions. Anonymity would be extremely difficult should I include photographs where people or places could be easily identified and associated with specific participants. I opted to ask the students to limit their photographs to spaces and unidentifiable images of people (for example, a shot of someone's back from a distance could be included but full on face shots would not). There were times where the participants challenged me regarding this, wanting their contributions to be openly tied to them. I explained the potential complications this may carry in the future and encouraged them to take any picture they chose with the remaining film. We could explore these images in the interview but I would be unable to share them with others. This compromise seemed to meet both my ethical concerns and the participants' desire to share stories and images of those who were important to them and my understanding of their individual narratives. Some students did take photographs of identifiable people and places. During the initial interview we went through their developed photographs and put ones that fit this category in the 'do not use' pile, for them to keep but not to be included in the data.

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[9] Rather than subjects exclusively.

Naming the community and school was also a concern in my preparation to conduct the research and write-up of the findings. The geographic and historic positioning of this community are unique and I felt that it was important to explore these components before looking at the data. Replacing the name of the community with another could generate artificial findings and in previous presentations I quickly learned that participants had an innate desire to know specifically where the narratives were from. Consequently, including the name of the community created less of a distraction and offered a unique historical and geographic understanding.

Limitations

Madison (2005) suggests that all data be explored with the following questions in mind:

> What are we going to do with the research and who ultimately will benefit? Who gives us the authority to make claims about where we have been? How will our work make a difference in people's lives? But we might also begin to ask another kind of question: What difference does it make when the ethnographer himself comes from a history of colonization and disenfranchisement. (p. 7)

Considering these foundational cautions and concerns for qualitative research, and particularly research with human participants, I cannot help but consider how the participants' responses could have varied had I not been in such a dominant position (White, middle-class, heterosexual, female). However, through artistic expression and the two month time-frame the limiting factors hopefully were less predominant than had I conducted oral interviews alone without the preparatory activities and time to work together learning about one-another.

My research employed multiple methods of data generation and with quite a large group of participants. A limitation of this, given the mass quantity of data and particularly the art projects, was that it was unfeasible to use all of the pieces. Therefore, given he data that is presented in this thesis, I have chosen to take up the photographs that the participants selected specifically while presenting some of their self-portraits.

I have made an effort to explore my research questions through a methodology that has the potential to deliver rich, diverse and compelling data that is consistent with the open intent of the questions. The primary goal was to explore individual student perceptions, and thus the opportunity to conduct individual interviews where they could do this explicitly was necessary. However, as I have mentioned in the previous sections, open-ended questions and exploring topics that the students identified was more easily achieved through the use of multiple methods with an arts-informed focus. This has also made it possible to focus the data chapters around the direction (words, self-portraits and photographs) of the participants.

Methodology Reflection

Use of an ethnographic structure made it possible to develop a rapport with participants prior to the interview, thus making the process feel like one aspect of a fluid process. As well, it was possible to delve into subject matter that may not have otherwise been exposed, such as the confrontation at lunch between one of the female participants and a former classmate. Having observed the aftermath and the way it affected the entire class, I found it pertinent that I explore this in the follow-up interviews and it organically worked its way into each of these. If I was using a rigid format and this conflict had taken place I would not have been able to address the conflict in a natural everyday way.

Another component of this study that helped build rapport and ease some discomfort was the use of art throughout my time in the classroom. Given the limited funding for the arts in Alberta, and the curricular omission of such methods in core subject matter, the initial presentation of such a method left some of the participants feeling uncertain of what they were asked and how best to participate. I am grateful that the classroom instructor recommended that I begin the project with a written response worksheet (the green sheet) where the participants could brainstorm.

This helped create both structure for their photographs as well as their interviews. There were several instances where the events they identified on the written response worksheet (green sheet) happened only once a year or were out of season. Therefore, it was possible to explore these instances that would have otherwise gone unacknowledged by asking them to provide a short written response to the questions, "spaces I like" and "spaces I don't like". Writing these short responses helped ground and support the research without focusing on these written responses as a primary tool.

Photo-elicitation creates a different context, structure and space to engage what may be uncomfortable and problematic subject matter. As Rosaleen Croghan, Christine Griffin, Janine Hunter and Ann Phoenix (2008) assert, photo-elicitation has increased in popularity as a form of data generation in the social sciences. Photo-elicitation interviews have the potential to trigger more memories and emotions than spoken interviews alone; images and verbal engagement work together to "[allow] individuals more scope for presenting complex, ambiguous and contradictory versions of the self" (Croghan *et al.*, 2008, 355).

Photographs typically carry "lens meaning" in that they appear to be truthful and therefore, trust is placed in their depiction (Emme, 1996). However, there are moments of ambiguity, intrigue and tension when they are referred in conjunction with other forms of data. For example, images that appear to be of a neutral social space (in terms of power-dynamics) may actually be identified as one of pain and transgression through the dialogue of an interview. The opposite is also possible: what one reader might see to be a hostile or unsafe space has the potential to elicit positive associations for the photographer and the observer.

A number of tensions are highlighted in the two data chapters that follow and previously in this chapter in figure 12: what some might see as a picture of a dangerous weapon is referred to with fondness and happy memories of shared family time. Where readers and researchers may be likely to see photographs as markers of fixed identity, throughout the interview process the dynamic engagement participants share with their social spaces are uncovered. Michael Emme (1996) takes the use of image in the classroom to argue that, "we owe our students the tools to reflect critically on their visual world" (p. 72). By engaging students in dialogue regarding their photographs, students have an opportunity to explain meaning behind their choice of space. They also express their understandings of the visual world (including their own social space) in safe way – that of the research project and photo-elicited interview.

In my methodology chapter I refer to Prosser (2003) and how he identifies images as ambiguous. The uncertainty of the images created a useful context for the interviews in that I found it easy to ask the students to explain the meaning and intent of each image. As a first-time qualitative researcher I found this very helpful in structuring the interviews and framing the context for the discussion and exploration. Although ambiguity was often evident, the photographs did reveal a story. Without directly labelling the images, when examined closely many of them seemed to relate, stereotypically to the participants' gender and class.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the methods I used to generate the data for this thesis. These methods included: my own journaling, participants completing a written-response worksheet, participants creating Self-Portraits, both the participants and myself taking photographs, ethnographic observation and object-guided semi-structured interviews. Some examples of these were included in this chapter and several more will be presented and discussed in relation to theory in the two following chapters. These methods work together to explore the ways school youth express and make sense of social space. They also come together to address similarities and areas of divergence in terms of how students perceive public spaces.

Chapter Five: Data on Community and Gendered Spaces

Figure 13: Harley

In this chapter I present some of the data that was presented using those methods and take up some of the relevant theory in relation to this data. This is one of two complementary chapters: in this chapter and the next, I will explore data generated through arts informed discussion with students' of "positive" and "negative" social spaces. As well I draw on student responses to other methods (e.g., written response worksheets and self-portraits) introduced during the broader class-based project on identity.

A number of themes were initially identified during my data analysis; however, for the purposes of clarity and time I highlight three main themes in this thesis: living in community spaces, gendered spaces, and youth transgression (authority and discipline). This chapter will address the two themes that relate to space. These themes reveal rich multi-layered data in terms of students' understandings of social space and community. As Henri Lefebvre (2002) argues, "social space is the environment…. [it] is made up of a relatively dense fabric of networks and channels. This fabric is an integral part of [illegible] everyday" (p. 231).

Living in Community Spaces

Without being asked explicitly, the participants regularly articulated self-perceptions of what it means to be male and female youth living in a rural community. In each of the interviews, as well as through informal interaction, perceptions of growing up in rural settings – and Petite specifically – were evident. While not all of the participants lived in Petite, each of them was asked to share their perceptions of the broader community as well as their personal residence (sometimes farming areas, reserves, neighbouring community etc). This linking of the individual to the group and community is important in trying to understand the concept of social space and how it might enable and constrain school youth perceptions and behaviour. As Lefebvre (2002) argues,

> Subjectively, social space is the environment of the group and of the individual within the group; it is the horizon at the centre of which they place themselves and in which they live. The extent of this horizon differs from group to group, according to their situation and their particular activities. (p. 231)

Student perceptions of rural life and spaces as being both constraining and enabling were expressed not only though the interviews but through other arts-informed methods used in the project. In the following narratives we see the ways in which school youth view the community as a social space and environment through which they live their lives. I start with their understanding of what is community for them.

Sarah: When you think of Petite what do you think of?

Joni: A small town. You don't know everyone but you almost do. Relatives.

Joni's alignment of community with size and a sense of the individual in relation to the group and family was also echoed by several other participants. When I asked one student to elaborate on her written response worksheet it became apparent that mobility and proximity to others played a major role in her friendship patterns and socialization during leisure time.

Student: When I hear community I think of my friends just because it's so small again. Like my dad's whole family lives here mostly. So if you're in a community lots of your friends and family would be right there with you. You could just walk to their house – be with them.

However, at times this physical proximity to family and friends was not always beneficial and resulted in family being perceived as a space constructed around violence. As Tom revealed in response to being asked about living near to his family community:

Tom: I don't really like it. Everyone always fights and there's always drugs being involved and everything. It's one family fighting themselves. A couple of months ago my cousin got beat up by his own family with bats and stuff... He got sent to the hospital, flown into Edmonton.

As well two participants used the worksheets to address substance use in the community. One participant shared an event that involved a personal experience with alcohol:

Sarah: When I asked you to write about community one of the words you replied with was "parties"…

Matthew: Parties, 'cause you go anywhere and you'll find a party in Petite… It's true. You go down the street and some guy's like [drinking] Lysol… If you go in front of the bar a whole bunch of guys come out… Everyone in this town drinks and if they don't drink they probably smoke pot…

> if they don't drink. And then usually they just smoke pot and drink… [you] practically see it everywhere.

While living in the closeness of a rural community meant an extension of knowledge about social activities and spaces that are stigmatized it could also lead to forms of knowledge that enable a sense of safety and security. For example, Emma's interview generated narratives that reinforced her written response to the concept of community.

Sarah: When we filled in the green sheets one of the first things you said about communities was safeness/laws. Tell me what you meant by that.
Emma: Because you live in a small community you probably know everyone so you feel real safe because you know them and you know they won't hurt you. And if you live here you know the police officers in our town. If you don't know them it's kind of weird. And it's safe and there are good laws like the bike helmet rule. And it's really safe.

Sarah: And what about the cities then? Is it safe or not safe?
Emma: Well it's safe but not as safe as out in a small town. In Petite you can be in two places at once because it's so small. In a city it's different. So I guess they would have more police officers but still you wouldn't know everyone.

In contrast to Emma, for Matthew the small size of the town was problematic and led to a lack of economic infrastructure that might bring in more people. Drawing on youth slang one participant highlights the negative aspects of living in a small rural town.

Sarah: What about grub town? Why did you write that?
Jacob: Because it's grubby.

Sarah: What does grubby mean?
Jacob: I don't know… just that everyone drinks and that it's kind of small and doesn't have a mall or anything. But, I don't really care.

Sarah: Do you like shopping malls?
Jacob: Not really. If they had a mall though – lots more people would come.

Sarah: To go shopping?
Jacob: And then probably more people would move here and stuff.

For this participant, grubby (which is derogatory) referred to the fact that the town has a small population and few amenities which appeared to be linked in some way to boredom and substance abuse. This participant's narrative reflects a sense of social space as ambivalent. He expressed discontent but did so in a blasé or indifferent tone.

A strong indicator of how a specific space was regarded was the context of the situation and the particular activities being undertaken.

For example, below, Emily speaks both positively and negatively of grocery store (a place where I saw her regularly) depending on whether her trip was self-initiated, peer-motivated or family initiated.

Sarah: What about some spaces in the town… like the store?

Emily: The store we always go in there at lunch. So you won't see your friends and then you'll go to the store and they'll all be there. That's really the only time we go there unless we need something for supper or something then we'll go there. But I know almost everyone that works there. My brother works there… and friends and cousin.

Sarah: Do you like going there?
Emily: I don't mind going there. At lunch I'll go there. And if my mom or dad ask me I say, "Ugg, I don't want to go to the store." (laughter)

School as Community

Within the narratives school as a community and social space was explored by school youth. Schools through timetables, classes and schedules enable certain spaces that can be taken up and engaged with in a variety of ways. So schedules regularize how social space is used by student youth. For example lunch times often pointed to spaces where they would socialize with one another. These opportunities for leisure time resulted in places and times where the participants engaged one another through similar interests and pastimes.

Sarah: Where do you eat lunch?
John: [A class] room with [my friends].

Sarah: And what do you guys do after you're done eating?
John: Sometimes go to the computer lab or sometimes just stay there and talk.

Sarah: Do you ever go to the gym?
John: For intramurals sometimes.

Sarah: What kinds of things do they do for intramurals?
John: Volleyball, badminton, basketball.

Sarah: And would you say most of the kids go there or not really?
John: 45%.

Sarah: And where do the other 55% go?
John: Some are in the homework room. Most go to the computer lab. Some are in the home economics room.

Of course not all of the interaction the participants shared in terms of community and peers was negative. Some of the most positive interactions focused around community building in school through extra-curricular sports. Discussions of volley ball team and how the teachers encouraged students to be positive about the team and their own contributions to the team was evident and was encouraged as part of community and team building. However this process was not straightforward and at times student narratives imply that such team building also reinforced a school based sense of "us" and "them" in relation to other schools. This was evident in Ethan's discussion of racialized tensions involved with students moving from the Band school to the public school.

Ethan: And then they're shutting down the band hall – I've heard. And then all them kids will have to come here… that should be a fun experience!

Sarah: What's going to happen?
Ethan: My brother's going to get in a bunch of fights. I can just see it. "Wankster for life." Because you know how they think they're black?

Sarah: So what name?
Ethan: Wankster. – white man trying to be a gangster.

Sarah: So your brother gets called that or he calls?
Ethan: No. he calls them that. So [another guy in high school] is going to get it. He walks out there and pulls his pants down and "wankster for life."

When I spoke with the participants in the classroom setting about why using racist terms was inappropriate on March 21, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the students appeared to agree that using racist language was inappropriate. However, the line was obviously blurred for the participants where pop-culture references (rooted in racial divisions) were used. There were obvious tensions between racialized groups as Ethan's excerpt above identifies.

The topic of both community ties and conflicts surfaced most visibly when I returned at the end of the school year to share my preliminary themes and flesh out some emergent areas of discussion. On the last day of school (a time where there is often heightened emotions) some of the students were involved in a confrontation at lunch that appeared to be initiated by the rivalry between students at the band school and provincial school. I asked a number of the students to share their observations and perceptions of this near-conflict.

Sarah: Tell me about what you were talking about earlier about the "scrap."
Alex: Well they didn't get to scrap because [the girl from the other school] backed off. At first we just heard about it and then we wanted to go see it. And we went outside and down and we were waiting and waiting.

And then we saw their big crew and they were waiting for Olivia to come out. And then [another girl's] mom asked Olivia if she wanted an escort back to the school. And then [two older friends] helped her go back to the school. Then there was a big group of grade seven kids. And [that other girl's] mom said, "don't fight with your sweater on."

Sarah: Her mom was going to watch her fight?
Alex: She was like, "if you fight, don't fight with your sweater on." Then we were watching and laughing………

Sarah: So why did they want to fight with her?
Alex: Because [she's] a skinny little girl. A skinny white girl who's scared to do anything… I don't think [she] would be able to defend herself. She'd probably run away. We told her that if she doesn't fight them now that they're just going to jump her in town. They'll probably just follow her.

Olivia also shared her perspective and historical understanding of the confrontation as one of the girls who was at the centre of the confrontation.

Sarah: Do you want to tell me what happened today?
Olivia: Um. Well when they left it was like a big [tension between the two schools]. They [Band school students] don't like kids who go to Petite School… [and the girl who wanted to fight me] wanted to fight me for a long time – not just today… Well when I see her when I'm walking – babysitting my cousins or something – she'll yell and… It doesn't matter who I'm with. She'll do it. And then yesterday we were walking by and I didn't really clue in that she'd be there.

There were varying accounts as to what had taken place and with some observers blaming the students from the Band school for starting the altercation and others inferring that in fact it was the students from the provincial school who started the argument

Leisure time: "hanging out"

Each of the participants addressed the topic of leisure time through their art and one-on-one interviews. Some male participants expressed a positive connection with the seclusion that was offered by "the bush". The bush was symbolic of an environment that is typically ascribed[10] to male bonding through such activities as hunting and trapping. Some of the youth in this community still participate in such activities.

As the following except demonstrates, the photographs created a context to explore family structures. By taking a photograph of a space where prized pelts of animals are displayed John connects this pastime with his grandfather. Relationships with family members outside the nuclear-family were articulated in several situations such as the one that follows.

Figure 14: Hunter Shack

Nathan: That's the hunter shack. We normally keep all the fir and that in there and my grandpa used to guide so we'd take all the beaver boards that we stretch beaver on down and clean up the walls and we'd wash all the bedding and that to get it all ready so they could stay in there if they didn't bring their trailer.

Sarah: So what is hanging on the wall?
Nathan: There's two Martin, a Fisher and there's four Ciouts.

Sarah: What are Martin and Fishers like?

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[10] by the participants in this study

Nathan: They're on land. I usually get them in Spruce trees and that. The Ciouts are from out in the field and in the bush. I caught some of these and grandpa got some. I couldn't get it all in the picture. I was going to take a couple of pictures but the bus came so I had to go…

Sarah: What do you like about this space?
Nathan: I like it out there because I like handling the fur and that… It's just real soft.

Sarah: How many years have you been doing this?
Nathan Since I was six. I've been going with grandpa since I was six: just me and grandpa. My mom sometimes goes along.

For some students leisure time was in relation to school and out of class activity. Often leisure time was constructed around the lockers during lunch time. As Cindy discusses her lunch time activities:

Sarah: What did you do at lunch?
Cindy: I was with my friend. We were just hanging out, eating lunch, talking.

Sarah: And where do you do that?
Cindy: Usually just by our lockers. We have no where else to hang out… [Sometimes I go to the store] when I have money. I go to the store and buy food like spuds and chicken nuggets… I like going there… you get to have good food for lunch… Sometimes I go to the restaurant and get pizza. I go [with one of my friends] mostly… we hang out [at the restaurant]. We just get our pizzas and then bring them back there so we're not late.

Figure 15: Locker

Sarah: Who else spends time by your locker with you? You, said that you eat lunch there?

Cindy: Um [female classmate]. Cause her locker's right beside mine... And [three other female classmates] are usually eating together – all of us. And then on the other side [there are four male classmates] that usually eat by their lockers.

Sarah: When [are you at your locker] during the day?
Hannah: Um, mostly at lunch and then when I have like a little time left, like in [one teacher's] class, like ten minutes or something I go to my locker and just look through it. (laughter) I don't know – I like looking at it.

Once again, the photographs of various venues not only created an ease in terms of discussing the space they photographed but also created opportunities to explore times where they do not routinely occupy the photographed space.

Sarah: What do you like to do during your lunch break?
Megan: I like to go up town [or I] sit with my friends in front of the lockers.

Sarah: What do you do there?
Megan: Eat, gossip, play around in our lockers… We didn't get to talk today because we had a leadership meeting. It's fun. I really like it. Usually we have discussions on what we should do next month or what happens. We're having yellow day on the 28th.

It is evident that when the school youth discuss their lockers it is in terms of a public /private space. This space is often designated as private through the use of various objects and images that illustrate for observer a sense of how the person wishes to be identified. It is about public identification as much as private spaces. Evident within the narratives and the photographs are how images from the media are used to construct a sense of self and identification.

Gendered Spaces

The significance of gender in relation to social spaces can be identified in the following quote from Nayak and Kehily, "gender is embedded in national and local cultures, institutional sites and settings, as well as everyday social relationship"

(2008, p.3). As with the previous discussion of lockers, gendered spaces were evident in school youth narratives about favourite spaces and in particular their bedrooms. Again media was significant in terms of constructing a space as gendered and private/public space.

Construction of Private Gendered Spaces: Media

Media is an important influence on how students construct and experience space. Television, music and magazines were important influences on the participants' lives. Abigail indicates how and why she has taken to reading magazines.

> Abigail: Yup. Usually when was little (grade five or four) I had not one single magazine. And then when my sister was going to college she gave me a bunch of stuff and the magazines were some. There are some really old ones in there. And since then, I was like, "Hey, these are kind of cool." And since then I've been getting more magazines… and more. And just, when I'm bored I take a magazine and I go through it, and there's little quizzes in them and everything. And sometimes I cut them out and give them to my friends so they can go through it and see what their answer was. I like reading about people. There are some magazines that you can get where there are life stories. So it's only about one person. And it's about how they got to where they are and how they became an actor/singer. So it's cool to read them.

The participants engaged media in a variety of forms. Some of the participants had recently acquired MP3 players and music was a large part of their day. The same was true during a field-trip that I attended as a supervisor. Some participants listened to their music privately while others listened to one compact disk that played on the school bus stereo. They also interacted with music via the internet, through movies and television programs as well as watching MTV or Much Music for those who had satellite television. The participants also expressed their knowledge and enthusiasm for specific genres and musicians in their bedrooms[11] via posters and displaying listening-devices.

The main way students communicated media's influence was through their artwork and photography. When asked to photograph spaces that they felt a positive connection to, some participants chose to photograph objects rather than physical locations. While the youth may have misinterpreted the instructions, it was noticeable that several of these chosen objects related to desirable objects to consume as identified through media and advertising. The following image is of an object that was photographed by a participant that depicts desire for consumer goods.

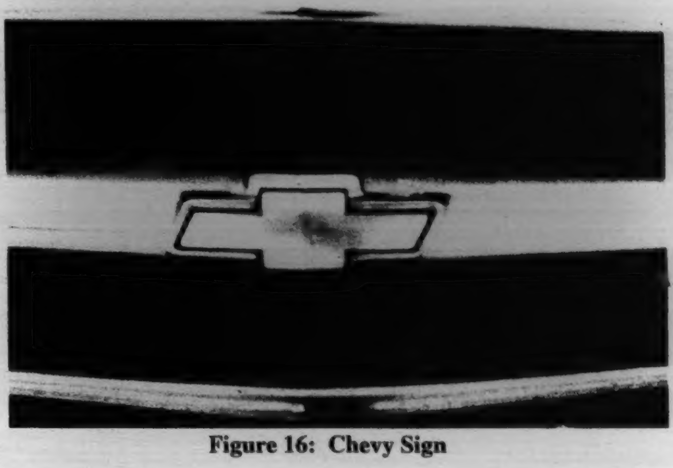

Figure 16: Chevy Sign

As addressed earlier in the methodology chapter, one of the first activities we carried out as a class was the creation of a self-portrait using a variety of techniques. The following image was one of these, and in contrast, some of the female participants chose to adapt their photos by adding a halo and wings. I was not able to determine who initiated the angel/devil portraits and participants were not able to articulate it either. However, the contrasting representations of self presumably based on gender and interesting in their own right and definitely had a relationship with a variety agents of socialization, presumably one of the overarching being media.

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[11] I elaborate on the bedroom and participant depictions later in the discussion chapter.

Another participant created a photo montage where he cropped a photo of his face on the body of Scarface from a number of different images from the "gangster" movie. This same participant would often break into song from the film Hustle and Flow. The main hip-hop song in this film is about the hardships the protagonist (a pimp) faces while trying to maintain his lifestyle and trying to break out as a rap artist. He talked about how he would watch gangster and mof (mafia) movies with his peers and family on satellite and that he liked the power and possessions of key characters.

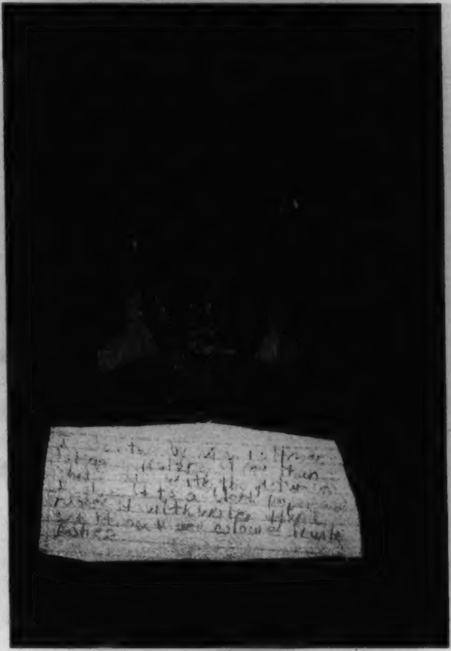

Figure 17: Self-Portrait

Another photograph that explicitly depicted a media connection with gender was one of provocatively dressed women on the male participant's bedroom wall. However, when I tried to flush out the reasoning for photographing these images, and why he liked this space he was hesitant to discuss it any further. Rather, he talked about the other objects that are also in his room.

Figure 18: Girls on my Wall

Construction of Private Gendered Spaces: Bedrooms

Mitchelle and Reid-Walsh (2002) argue that, "it is domestic spaces such as bedrooms, rather than the public spaces of playgrounds, that prove to be more conducive sites to studying children's' popular culture" (p. 117). Among my participants, many adhered to Mitchelle and Reid-Walsh's assertion: bedrooms as a site for studying popular culture. A number of the participants took photos of their bedrooms (and objects in them) as representations of positive spaces. The photographs often highlight objects in mass media and popular culture that represent their social class and gender. In Chloe's photograph above, the gendered nature of the bedroom is also highlighted by the pink walls, neatly displayed

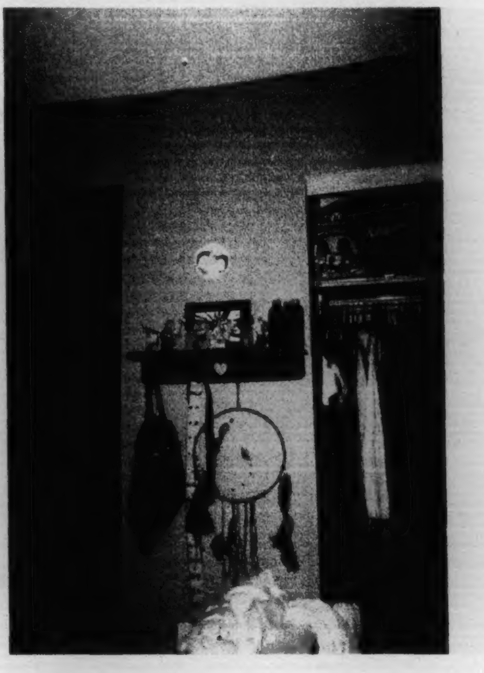

Figure 19: Baby Girl

objects, well-organized closet, ice cream machine and Easy-Bake Oven.

As Chloe's image shows, her bedroom is a place that is orderly, tidy and feminine. It points to ways she engages both her bedroom (private space) and social interactions. When we talked about the Easy-Bake Oven on the top shelf of her closet her narrative transitioned to times where she bakes for enjoyment. However, she also talked about less enjoyable times where baking was regarded as her contribution to the family. Interpretations of baking, as with most interactions, were dependent on the context. This example can been seen as relating to Willis (1996) where he identifies the "hard work" in play.

Each of the participants talked about their bedroom as private and as a retreat from siblings. Bedrooms as private spaces provide opportunities for the participants to explore and represent themselves in safe ways. As Baker (2004) asserts, "it was in the bedroom that the girls could safely explore popular music and cultural (gendered) identity… [they] locate themselves within the broader cultural contexts and insert themselves into the 'adult world' and the process of production" (p. 90). In this study this was also the case for the male participants. Displaying posters that relate to pop culture and leaving ones bed messy point to these moments of self-assertion and producing or reproducing the adolescent bedroom.

Figure 20: My Room

The bedroom space depicted above can appear to be trivial, but Baker (2004) argues these spaces, "are in fact vital to the identity process" (p. 77).

Schools and Gender

In the narratives schools produce spaces which are gendered through both formal structures and informal friendship patterns. By way of theorization, I take up, van Ingen's (2003) assertion that, "identifying a sense of place to the ethnographic site forces us to see and analyze connections among sites as lived social relations and not merely as conceptual links forged by the imagination of the ethnographer" (p. 327). Within my research lived social relations within schools were evident.

Each of the participants appeared to be comfortable discussing social interaction in terms of friendship patterns. During the time I was present in the class as a volunteer and researcher I was able to participate in large school functions and observed school assemblies. The students were assigned seating areas in the school gymnasium based on grade level but they appeared to further divide themselves into sub-groups. I asked each of the participants to explain how they decided where to sit in such assemblies and to elaborate on other free time for social interaction.

Sarah: So tell me about the school assembly – choosing seats.
William: That's where my friends were [four male classmates].

Sarah: So how else is the seating broken up?
William: It's usually like that and then there's [four other guys]. And then across from all of us there's all the girls… [in] one big group…

Sarah: What kinds of things do they do when they're together? And what kinds of things do you guys do when you're together?
William: I don't know. We just sit there and talk crap.

Sarah: So what kinds of things were you talking about Monday morning?
William: What we did on the weekend and stuff… went quading a whole bunch…

The male participants perceived their female classmates as part of one large group (all females). For the most part, the female participants perceived the males as a homogenous group but identified their own as having subgroups.

Haley: You're always in your little group things.

Sarah: So what are the groups you saw?
Haley: Well in our class I saw the boys. Almost all the boys are together. But for the girls there are three groups. It's weird how the boys are always together and the girls are separate… One [group] is people [girls] who like Anime stuff – drawings and how they like to draw people. The other one is like how I like to hang out but they don't hang out. They just hang out with each other. They just don't have a name – or us. We're the same. We just don't hang together.

Sarah: So what do you think you have in common with the girls in group that's different from the other group?
Haley: Everyone in our group always plays. We all like basketball, we all like volleyball we all like just those sports and we all like never get in fights. In the other group sometimes they'll split up and one will be with us. So it's different with us. You'll never see one of us with the other person. We'll always be together… It's not like we don't want to hang out with the other people it's just that when they get in a fight they want to hang out with us. So they still like what they used to like. They just act like they like what we like. They'll say, "oh ya, that's cool" but really they won't like it… [They say that] Because they want

to get along with us because they're not getting along with their other friends.

Sarah: And what about the other girls who changed schools in the last little while? Were they part of one of the groups?
Haley: [One of them] would hang out with our group. But the other girls who left were part of their own group. So there were four groups. They just don't get along with anyone. They don't get along with us or anyone. They just hang out alone.

Each of the female participants agreed that there were sub-groups of females in their peer-group. However, they had different opinions regarding how many sub-groups existed and some variance regarding who belonged to each.

Sarah: Tell me about where you sat today at the school assembly.
Jessica: I just sat with my friends. Guys are usually on that side and the girls are on the other side. It's just me, my cousins and my friends… [the girls are] kind of divided up because [three girls] are always together so they always sit by themselves… they play video games and everything. Those three are grouped by themselves and then me and my friends and cousins [are one group]. And the guys are by themselves… in one big group.

Sarah: Why do the "gamers" sit alone?
Jessica: That's their friends and that's where they like to sit. They could come sit with us but they choose not to I guess.

Sarah: Could you go sit with them?
Jessica: Ya. I just like to be with my cousins and friends.

Jessica perceived fluidity in terms of friendship groups, while acknowledging that there were some female classmates that she did not socialize with, nor did she spend social time with her male classmates. For the most part, the female participants viewed their male classmates as one cohesive group; however, there was one female participant who saw the boys as belonging to one of two groups.

Sarah: So there's two groups of boys?

Julia: The one group likes girls. Well, they both like girls but they don't watch. They aren't too crazy about girls like the other guys are.

Sarah: What do they do that makes them crazy about girls?
Julia: I don't know. They have posters of them on their wall and all that.

Sarah: Which group of guys do you get along with/like better?
Julia: I don't like any of them.

One participant addressed how gendered barriers are not always in existence by identifying times where the female and male participants choose to spend time together. However, this participant presented it as a situation where she expressed little agency in choosing how to spend her free time, that is, there was no alternative.

Grace: Sometimes I hang out with my friends [girl clique] and sometimes I hang out with the boys and my friends.

Sarah: So how is that different?
Grace: We talk about different stuff than we usually do.

Sarah: So what's better?
Grace: Hanging out with just the girls.

Sarah: So why do you hang out with the boys too?
Grace: Sometimes there's no one else to hang out with so I just hang out with them [because they're there].

I also witnessed times where some male and female participants spent time together socializing, particularly during lunch time. Some participants would leave the school grounds (perhaps not explicitly in gender-mixed groups) arriving at the same place to purchase lunch off school grounds.

Each of the participants appeared to be comfortable discussing gendered divisions in terms of friendship patterns as well as the ways they were treated differently – and responded differently – in school. I asked each participant about the classes they took where they were divided into gendered groups for portions of instruction. For example, for half the school year female students would take industrial arts while male students took home economics (this reversed during the other half of the year). I asked them how they felt about this division, why it might be in place, and how things would be different if they were not divided along gendered lines.

Sarah: So how would it be different if you were together?
Sophie: Well it would be a lot different. I heard my friends talking – they have gym with boys and they said how much more competitive it is. So if shop and home ec were that way it would be a lot more competitive. And the teacher says that the boys are always so much better at cooking and sewing.

Sarah: Than the girls are?
Sophie: Ya. So it would be weird to have a combination of both. Since one's better and the other's not as good.

Sarah: Do you agree? Is one gender better at those things that the other?
Sophie: Well just looking at a girls hat and a boys – theirs was way better than mine. They're concentrating and we're fooling around. So I think that we're visiting and they're focusing and they're into it. We're laughing.

Sarah: So they girls aren't really competitive with each other?
Sophie: No not really. And the boys want to do it exactly the way. And we just do our own thing.

This female participant perceived her own classroom behaviour as disruptive and off-task during the classes where the female students were separated. For her, this was a social space where she was permitted to socialize and have flexibility in contrast to the core academic classes where the students were not divided. The following male participant also felt that there was greater freedom when the students were separated based on gender, but he believed that the female students were better behaved then the male students and that they (males) would be pressured to behave in a regimented way if they were taught with their female classmates.

Sarah: And how would it be different if you were mixed?
Nicholas: It would be a lot different. It wouldn't be so much fun.

Sarah: What would make it less fun?
Nicholas: Not fooling around. The girls don't like to fool around… they just do their work.

Sarah: And you guys…?
Nicholas: Nothing. We just chuck cards around and boards… [and] we wouldn't get to make as much stuff as we did. We'd probably have to make little girl things instead of bats… piggy banks and stuff like that.

The perceived gendered division of assignments was identified by each of the female participants. Each appeared to express some discontent and for some it was a hot point of contention. In the following response the participant repeated her frustration a number of times. A general frustration toward boys was expressed during this point and others in the same interview.

Isabel: The boys are trouble makers. They kind of do anything that they think of… if it comes in their head they do it… spit balls and that's gross… for home ech. the first half [of the year] is boys and the second half is girls.

Sarah: How would it be different if they were mixed classes?
Isabel: Pretty scary… it would be the same as in [one of our other classes]. [The teacher] gets all mad and the girls get in trouble for nothing and the boys would be all giggling and everything.

Sarah: Why is it that the boys cause trouble?
Isabel: Because they're guys and that's what they do.

Sarah: Do other guys do that too?
Isabel: My brother does.

Sarah: What about girls?
Isabel: They're usually well behaved and just have fun watching movies or making stuff… like food or juice, sewing projects. That sort of thing… they are just different from guys. They don't have the same kind of wants and everything. Girls could want, like a new dress and guys would want a new quad. Girls would probably want a new quad too

just not all the time… it kind of depends on what the girl does and who she is… just by their personality.

Sarah: And what about Industrial Arts (IA)?
Isabel: We just make stuff with wood. That's what we've been doing because we're girls. And the guys have been making CO2 cars and everything and we're sitting there making rulers… that kind of sucks compared with CO2 cars and I don't think that's fair. He [the teacher] just did that because we're girls. He thinks we're some kind of wimp or something… cause the hardest thing we got to do in shop was a flute. The first thing the guys did was a C02 car. The first thing we did was a ruler.

Sarah: Is there anywhere else that girls and guys are treated differently?
Isabel: In home ech. we just do the same thing as the guys really but in shop there's the difference because guys want to do different things. We said bow and arrows and they probably said the CO2 cars.

Sarah: The girls wanted to make bows and arrows?
Isabel: But he didn't let us make that. We made flutes instead and mirrors… the mirrors were kind of cool because you would put tape on it and cut it in a shape or something like a heart or star and you could go and sand blast it and it would look like frost… that was cool. He picked that project. It was okay… but not as cool [as the CO2 car].

There was consensus that a different atmosphere was created when the "boys and girls" were separated for classes. When probed most of the participants felt that separation was conducive to creating a more-focused and positive work environment.

Sarah: What do you think of separating the boys and girls for these subjects.
Maya: It's okay… it's good… you don't have to be with boys.

Sarah: How would it be different if they were mixed?
Maya: We wouldn't accomplish things as much… I wouldn't probably… because they talk.

Sarah: And do you talk?
Maya: Well I talk and work… it's easier to finish stuff [when they're not around]… we talk about some stuff like cooking and getting into groups and stuff, what we're going to do. [When they boys are there] we talk about stuff not to do with school.

Sarah: What do you think the boys talk about when you're not there?
Maya: Dirt bikes maybe, quads, bikes maybe.

Gendered divisions were put in place in other classes as well. There were times where a rivalry was encouraged between male and female classmates. This was not necessarily negative in the eyes of all participants.

Sarah: Why do you think it's the way it is [for home economics and industrial arts]?
Lorin: I don't know. Usually at gym class we go boys against the girls.

Sarah: Do you like that?
Lorin: Ya, it's fun.

Sarah: What's the best part of that?
Lorin: Depends on if some of the good people are gone – because they are better than us. Like the ones [boys] with strong arms. When they're there it's good but bad because we always loose.

Male/female competition was positive in this example, but only if the outcome was favourable for the "girls". In recognizing the structure and organization of schools, as not just curricular and static it is useful to draw on van Ingen's (2002) understanding of, "place as a locus of intersecting social relations [that] sharpens ones sensibilities to the political consequences of defining a site or sites" (p. 327). Such an understanding allows for highlighting issues of power.

It is evident that gender is a significant aspect of students' lives and in how space becomes social. Understandings of masculinity and femininity are highlighted in the student narratives. Here I draw on Anoop Nayak and Mary Jane Kehily (2008) in their book *Gender, youth and culture: Young masculinities and femininities* (2008) which addresses understandings of masculinity and femininity. In their introduction they note that, "Of particular interest … is the way in which gender is embedded in national and local cultures, institutional sites and settings, as well as everyday social relationships" (p. 3). In the context of my research, the quote illustrates the ways in which my research participants highlighted their leisure activities for me. For example, each of the male participants made reference to "traditionally male" pastimes such as riding all-terrain vehicles and hunting. While there is little doubt that these are typically masculine pastimes, it is unlikely that male participants of a similar study in an urban setting would outline these as typical leisure activities. Although Vanderbeck and Dunkley (2003) argue, these distinctions are often blurred.

Nayak and Kehily's (2008) assertion that gender is embedded in the everyday social relationships is evident. So for example, when I asked a female participant to relate the differences between what she described as two groups of male classmates, she identified the primary distinguishing factor to be their overt attraction to their female classmates. Dating was also an important factor in their lives and a number of the participants expressed an attraction toward one another and some were openly "dating". When I did a teaching practicum in an urban junior high, such dating did not appear to be the case. Dating did not seem to happen until the latter half of grade nine, and then only for a select group. Maybe the size of the rural communities enables spaces that highlight the possibilities of taking up certain roles. In this particular school there were a number of spatial and institutional practices that signalled that grade seven was the beginning of adolescence and departure from childhood. For example, grade seven students are required to enter the school through one designated door, thus marking them as junior high students rather then elementary. This also points to the sexual heteronormative nature of dating students experience in schools.

By looking at gender, as opposed to sex, as a distinguishing factor throughout the data chapter, we move "away from notions of gender as either a biological essence of a knowable category that is fixed upon the bodies of men, women, girls or boys… [and rather explore] understanding[s] of gender as a lived process" (Nayak and Kehily, 2008, p. 5). This appeared to be the case when participants described the ways authority dealt with them such as the example of Isabel in this chapter. For Isabel, the only reason why her male classmates were allowed to make CO2 cars was because they were perceived in a certain way by their teacher, a way in which Isabel and her female classmates were not. Isabel's observation and understanding is again in line with Nayak and Kehily (2008) where they state, "… gender is not simply a matter of choice, but a negotiation that occurs within a matrix of social and historical forces enshrined in the ideological arenas of law, religion, family, schooling, media, work and so forth" (p. 5).

Chapter Summary

This chapter has explored and presented various components of data gathered throughout this study. Both the images and transcribed text have worked together to highlight two common themes that the participants addressed: living in community spaces and gendered spaces. Media is a significant aspect in terms of how these youth represent and perceive themselves. The following chapter will continue to present data that draws on youth transgressions (authority and discipline).

Chapter Six: Data on Youth Transgressions (Authority and Discipline)

Figure 21: Crown on Top of the Earth

In this chapter narratives of the students will be presented in relation to the theme youth transgressions (authority and discipline). This chapter will include youth transgressions in relation to the family, school and police officers. I will also explore issues of power in social space in the context of my data using theoretical literature.

Often "childhood innocence is celebrated and protected while individual children who transgress are vilified – their behaviour placing them beyond the realm of 'proper' children and normal childhood" (Kehily, 2004, p. 7). Judgments of moral transgressions (e.g., hitting, stealing) have been found to be generalizable (i.e., wrong across social contexts), non-rule-contingent (i.e., wrong even if there were no rule against it), and rules that pertain to moral acts are seen as unalterable. In contrast, social conventional transgressions (e.g., calling a teacher by his/her first name, eating with one's fingers) are seen as relative to the social context. These transgressions are contingent on the existence of an explicit social rule, and rules regarding social conventions (Kehily, 2004).

Family and Traditional Authority

In my data, relationships with official authority figures – parents, grandparents, police and school – appeared to vary depending on the gender of the participant. Both male and female participants had a similar perception of home discipline; each of the narratives pointed toward the female guardian as the primary disciplinarian at home. Some of the participants lived in homes where the female guardian was the sole caregiver. Others lived in nuclear families with both biological parents. And yet others lived in homes where the female was the legal guardian, but other adults were regularly involved in the household or lived there full time. In each of these households, perceptions of the female guardian as the disciplinarian were common.

Sarah: Does your mom do most of the disciplining?
Jack: Yes. My dad doesn't. I don't know. He's kind of like a kid in a big body. He's the same way… as us. It's funny. He does the same stupid stuff.

As the example above demonstrates, there were a number of tensions that were addressed in each response. The notion of father as rebel and ally was brought up more than once but was not universal across the data. Discontent in the way siblings were reprimanded was much more common, particularly where younger siblings were concerned.

Sarah: Do you like having a big family?
Josh: No… I always have to show them how to be respectful and stuff… they always hit me, call me names, go in my room and mess it up… I can't really do nothing 'cause then I have to clean it up myself. I can't do anything about it.

Sarah: Does someone do something about it?
Josh: My mom… she just yells a little and sends them to their room.

In a similar vein, Zack recalls his disciplinary experiences at home:

Sarah: What do you think about having a brother?
Zack: We fight all the time.

Sarah: What do you fight about?
Zack: I don't know. We just get in arguments all the time… My mom always gets into the middle of it… She sends us to the bedroom… separate rooms.

The notion of female parent as decision-maker translated to other non-discipline related instances as well. Generational power was also addressed by some. Regularly, grandmothers were referred to as powerful authority figures to be respected. In some situations there was a tone of resentment, but for the most part it was an acknowledgement of the senior role the grandmother held and the expectation that grandchildren listen when the grandmother speaks.

Sarah: What are some things you think are fun?
Elizabeth: Eating. I like to eat at restaurants, like BP's. We don't really go anywhere else because my grandma doesn't like it anywhere else. We usually go with my grandma… [She decides] because usually she's the one driving and she's the grandma – the mom of my mom… the leader.

Understandings of discipline, among the participants, were relational. The participants often addressed discipline and family dynamics in terms of how they behaved and were reprimanded in relation to their siblings. For those with younger brothers or sisters, comments indicated discontent regarding the severity of consequences (they specifically felt their younger siblings deserved harsher punishment). For those who did not have younger siblings, discussion of reprimands rarely focused on others but they did comment on how they were punished or what they were able to do without overt consequences.

Sarah:	What do you think of your brother?
Victoria	Terrible. He's distracting and annoying… [I] hurt him… jump on him because he jumps on me. Pin him down or anything to distract him. I usually get in trouble… because I'm bigger and should know better. He started it… I don't think that's fair because he starts it.
Sarah:	Who gives you trouble?
Victoria:	My mom… she juts tells me to stop and then I'll stop. Then he'll jump on me and I'll do it again and she'll be real mad at us.

The way participants' responded to punishment also varied for case to case.

Sam:	My grandpa's cows got out the other day - it was funny. They were just walking down our drive way. I was there. But I wasn't allowed to use my quad because I got in trouble. – I got suspended. It was for mooning people… I got in trouble so my mom wouldn't let me drive the quad for a couple of days. But I didn't care. I didn't drive it any ways. There was nowhere to go.

The male participants presented themselves as unfazed by the consequences they received. Their response to the consequences – like their response to authority – was rooted in ambivalence. They reflected on their penalties as nuisances or inconvenience as opposed to something to avoid in future situations. As the statement above highlights, punishment is perceived to be payment for rebellious behaviour. Acts of rebellion were associated with adolescent development and on occasion with masculinity such as the comment made by Sam.

While earlier in the chapter one student identified knowing your neighbours and local authorities as reinforcing a sense of safety for some: this sense of safety appeared to be gendered. For male participants knowing the police officers did not explicitly translate to a sense of safety; rather, the connection between some of the participants to police (and authority in general) was oppositional through minor acts of vandalism and organized resistance. While exploring regularly occurring situations, and events, Halloween rituals highlighted this sense of transgression:

Sarah: What do you do for Halloween?
Ryan: Go egging. You go to the store and buy some eggs. You've got to go a couple of days before because they won't let you buy them on Halloween.

Sarah: Who doesn't let you?
Ryan: The store keeper… You grab some eggs and chuck them at houses… [houses of] people we don't know.

Sarah: So what do you like about that?
Ryan: Last year my friend chucked an egg at a police car. The police stopped and put on the spot light. And then we just ran. Some people bring paint ball guns and sling shots with paint balls.

Police and Authority

In several environments youth are positioned in opposition to police. As I have demonstrated earlier, some of the female participants expressed a different perspective and saw police as allies in community settings. However, mass media highlights the antagonistic relationship between youth and police is numerous situations and this was also reflected in my study through the narratives.

Racialized division (in terms of who the participant would egg) was expressed. However, the racialized binary of the Rez[12] versus others was not consistent and at times: the "us" versus "them" binary changed from one that was rooted in racialized divisions to one based on youth and authority. Noah outlines the story clearly in the following interview excerpt.

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[12] The term Rez is used here in reference to the reserve as Noah identifies in the following transcript excerpt.

Sarah: What do you get to do when you're 13 that you don't get to do when you're 12?
Noah: I don't know yet. Well, I got to go egging and stuff when I was 12.

Sarah: Tell me about egging.
Noah: About Halloween? You just grab a carton of eggs – go out with a group of people. Then you see another group of people and have an egg war. Or sometimes you just egg houses or something or cars that are going by…

Sarah: How do you decide what group you're in when you go out?
Noah: I don't know. Usually – well last time – it was just me and [a friend] and we just met up with a bunch of other people… One person was from this school.

Sarah: How do you decide to join a team with them instead of egg them?
Noah: I don't know if you know them you go with them.

Sarah: So who's on these other teams that you end up egging?
Noah: Ah, people from the Rez… mostly.

Sarah: Do you know the people that you end up egging?
Noah: Mostly, ya. It's fun. And they egg back. Then usually when the police come everyone turns into one big group against the police.

Sarah: Against the police? Did that happen to you this year?
Noah: We were there and I was going by [a teacher's] house. And we saw the cops come and some of them just turned around and stood their ground. We all stood there and the cops came out of their cars and we all threw the eggs and they just went back in their cars and stayed in there. The cars were just yellow… Then we went to [teacher's] door step trying to get in but she wouldn't let me. Then I said trick or treat because I thought the cops were going to take me away for vandalism.

Sarah: So what do you like about that kind of stuff?
Noah: It gets your adrenaline pumping… they were new cops. That was their first week in [town]... They all went inside and everything and got a whole bunch of complaints… and then my older brother [18] was out egging. It was hilarious. I was like, awh. That's when it was whites verses Indians and I thought that he was Indian. And I threw an egg at him.

Sarah: So why did you think he was?
Noah: Because he had this big toque on and he was running real fast down the back alley. And, if you really want the cops on us you go inside the bar and throw eggs in there… Supposedly they hit the

> [employee/owner] right in the face. And he phoned the cops. Someone shattered a window with an egg… I don't know how they did it. Like how would you do that? A whole bunch of eggs hit one window and then it shattered… it might have been boiled but there was an egg splatter there so I was like… I don't know.

Therefore, the category of youth (or civilian) provided greater autonomy than that of whiteness or Aboriginal culture when confronted by law enforcement. Transgression becomes the primary determinant in that specific space and context.

Another male participant addressed egging and Halloween rituals for adolescent youth in our interview as well. While this student also participated in egging, he did so in another community. However, both participants chose not to overtly notify their parents of this event.

Sarah: So who did you go out with?
Ben: Just a few of my buddies from another town…

Sarah: And who do you throw [the eggs] at?
Ben: Well if there's little kids we don't throw at them.

Sarah: But if they're your age or older?
Ben: Ya… they're probably just trick or treating…

Sarah: And where did you run?
Ben: Into the bush.

Sarah: And what did the police do?
Ben: Just [shine] the spotlight.

Sarah: So what happens at the end of the night?
Ben: You just go home.

Sarah: Do people ever throw eggs at you?
Ben: Nope.

Sarah: And how old were you when you started?
Ben: A couple of years ago.

Sarah: And how did you start?
Ben: Just a couple of my friends. I heard them talking about going and then they asked me if I wanted to go and I said, "yup".

Sarah: Did you tell your parents?
Ben: Nope… [They thought I was going] trick or treating.

Families are also spaces that produce opportunities for social transgression as can be seen in several of the interviews and particularly in the above excerpt with Ben and Joe. Whereas norms and convention indicate that families are always sites of pleasure both males indicate that families can be stressful spaces of social interaction.

Sarah: Grandma's house?
Joe: When you go there she starts whining about how no one comes to see her. So you just go there. I don't dislike her house or anything. It's just that she whines so much.

Sarah: So you go there to visit?
Joe: Ya. Only as limited time as I can get. Only if my cousin's are there I'll stay for a while. Then she calms down because my cousins are her babies…. she buys them anything they want. She would buy me stuff but she gives lots of stuff to them…. you get there and you're so bored. And she's crying about no one ever comes to see her…

Sarah: What do you have to do when you're there? What was the last time like?
Joe: We were there to drop off the dishes. And she always makes you sit there for an hour. She won't let you go.

It is evident that the relationship between Joe and his grandmother is strained. This may well be due to changes in family structures in modern times, as Lynn Hoffman (2006) argues, "the predominance of nuclear families over extended ones and the increasing geographic distance between nuclear families and their extended family members have reduced the regular, intimate contact that children once had with grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins" (p. 60).

Schools and Authority

School as portrayed by the participants was often a space of social transgression, a space that provided opportunity for students to transgress conventional norms and values and authority – a space through which they can challenge the boredom and authority of schooling.

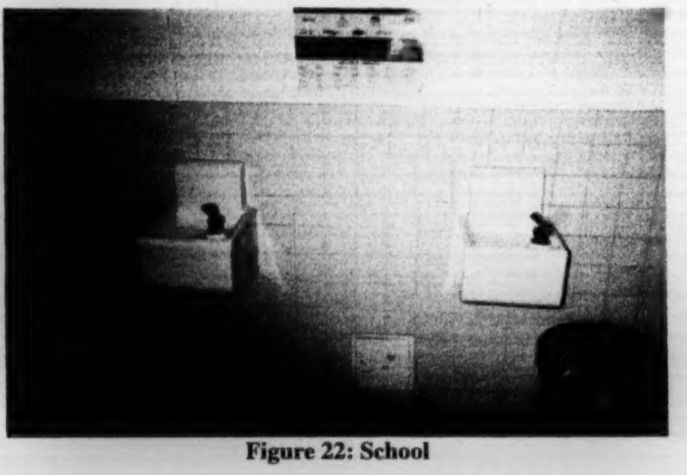

Figure 22: School

Michael: This is my favourite place [in the school]. I go get a drink.

Sarah: When do you go there?
Michael: Wherever I'm in the hallways. I ask to go get a drink and then I go fool around.

Sarah: Where do you fool around?
Michael: Computer lab.

Sarah: So you ask to get a drink and then you stay out for a while?
Michael: [Ya, it's] nothing much. Go in there... It's fun. You don't work.

Sarah: So you don't like sitting in class?
Michael: No.

Each participant had at least one photograph of their school environment and for varying reasons: some identified school as a positive space while others viewed it – or specific spaces within the school – negatively. Disaffection with school was not just related to those who regarded schools as academically challenging. The students who rarely left the classroom and were high academic achievers also expressed some discontent regarding school and formal instruction. The spaces of transgression were different to those illustrated here.

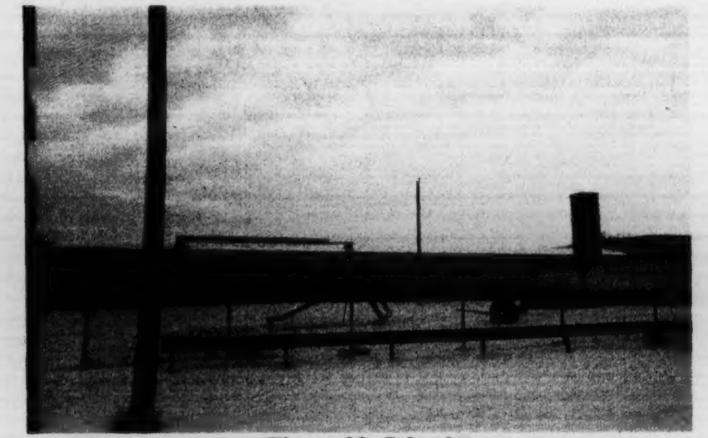

Figure 23: School

Rachel: It's not that I don't like school. It's just one of my least favourite places that I have to go to every day so I get tired of it. And ya, there is fun moments at school like lunch time and all that but once you have to go into class and do work it's kind of boring. And I took the picture of it because I don't like it as much as other places.

It should be noted that while some students regarded school as a negative space, this was not consistent and such discourses developed alongside support for traditional conceptions of what constitutes knowledge and how schools should operate. For the most part, the participants were keen to share their perceptions of schooling and offer critique of both their own programming and those that proposed alternate modes of instruction. This topic seemed to surface while they elaborated on their photographs and shared stories of typical experiences.

Sarah: And why do you come to this school?
Aiden: Because it's a better school than that [band] school.

Sarah: What makes it better?
Aiden: Learning. 'Cause over there you don't learn nothing.... They just swear at the teachers. The teachers don't do nothing. They just go on field trips. It's not educational.

Sarah: How do you know that?
Aiden: That's what one of my buddies who goes there tells him.

Sarah: Why does he say that?
Aiden: He doesn't go there [now]. He goes to [another school]. He used to go there.

Sarah: So what about the [one of the other schools you could go to]?
Aiden: You don't learn nothing there. My brother was in grade three and at a grade one reading level. He didn't know how to write. So my mom and dad sent him to [a different provincial school] and now he's at a grade four level. In four months he got up to a grade four reading level and he started writing.

Although the statements above express a desire for mainstream structured education, this was contradicted and resisted in the students' own representations of educational experiences and spaces within the school.

Social Space and Issues of Power

Lefebvre (1991) argues that there are different types of space ranging from natural (absolute or physical) space to those less-distinctive spatialities that are socially produced (social spaces). In this text he refers to how space is a social construct based on values and social meanings which affects the way the space is perceived and engaged. In relation to my study, Lefebvre's observation became evident throughout the photo-elicited interviews. For example, one student described the image of the water fountain (as shown in the previous chapter) initially as negative. However, when I asked him to describe the context within which he engages it, it was in moments of transgression of wider school rules. He described it as his favorite place in the school and when I asked him to elaborate on his interactions with the fountain, it became apparent that the larger negative assumption was about the formal, structured, instruction-based learning while his specific engagement with the fountain as opposition to school structure was positive. Therefore, this can be regarded as a moment where social space transposed the physical overall structure of the school and fountain and created a positive engagement for the student.

The physical engagement with space, as a participant highlights, is about power: finding ways to assert ones own power however limited it might be by the current social situation and relationships at play in the given physical space. Throughout the interview, the same student describes moments and movements between spaces – opportunities where his relationship with power and the powerful is changed through social spaces.

The school site creates social interaction and informs relationships between those who occupy it. The space consists of the physical, mental and social. The exchanges that take place in each of these spaces are alive and shape the ways the space is viewed and engaged. Just as the engagement shapes the space, the space also shapes the engagement. This was evident through social interactions including the participants' description of the lunch-time confrontation away from school property in what appeared to be an unregulated public space, the way students overtly showed signs that they were "dating" and reinforcing heteronormativity through their use of hallway time and their physical lockers (that is, displaying notes that signified who was in a relationship) as well as the ways in which they grouped themselves during school assemblies.

The students' interactions within various spaces were also indicated through their descriptions of their family. The participants often referred to their bedrooms as spaces where they were able to assert some control over their own lives. However, this was not necessarily the case, as younger (or older) siblings attempted to cross the social and physical boundary of personal space as a demonstration of power by occupying the participant's space. One student described his efforts to assert control over his bedroom as futile. He mentioned his siblings "messing it up" and his mother being the only one with the ability to reprimand them. This sense of having some authority in one's own space, while feeling powerless in certain situations, was repeated by other participants: particularly where interactions with siblings and parents were concerned.

Lefebvre's work, grounded in Marxist theory, makes it well-aligned for engagements with power and therefore critical theory and ethnography. And while his work is traditionally associated with urban points of reference it is transferable to this group of rural youth.

In an interview one student talked about the formal structure of the classroom and how it was used both for subjects he found little interest in as well as a detention room. The physical structure and spatial practices, "people's perceptions of the world, of their world, particularly its everyday ordinariness" (Merrifield, 2006, p. 110) are at the forefront when this student identifies the room as a negative space. The way this space is used to punish negative behaviour and to elicit a desirable response in future situations is at play in his perception. His perceived, conceived and lived engagement with what appears to be a typical classroom results in his understanding of this as a negative social space.

Figure 24: Classroom

Some of the participants also compiled objects in a specific space to represent something larger than the physical space in which the photograph was taken. For example, in the image below, Samantha takes various sports equipment and places them together as grouped objects to represent something that she is a part of: jock culture. She sees these objects in relation to one another and finds a way to represent them together. In one of our interviews, she talked about two of the sports she displayed as extra-curricular but offered at the school, figure skating as offered by the community at the local skating rink and snow boarding as a sport that she accesses on her own with some of her friends but separate from a structured community or school initiative. Although all engaged in distinct ways, they all work together in her understanding of social spaces centered on sports.

Figure 25: Sports

Nayak and Kehily (2008) look to Thorne (1993) who suggests that in childhood, friendship patterns work to separate children based on boys and girls through play and socialization. This works to create boundaries between sexed separations and to create understandings of gender. However, this also results in opportunities to cross the boundaries, to question gendered and aged divisions. It is in the crossing of boundaries that opportunities arise for the participants to depart from childhood in an attempt to assert themselves as adolescents. This divergence from the social norm appears to be more acceptable among male and female, "who had achieved a position of high status within their peer group" (p. 10). This appeared to be the same case in the classroom where this study took place, and appeared to be most common when the participants began to "date" one another.

Figure 26: Self-Portrait

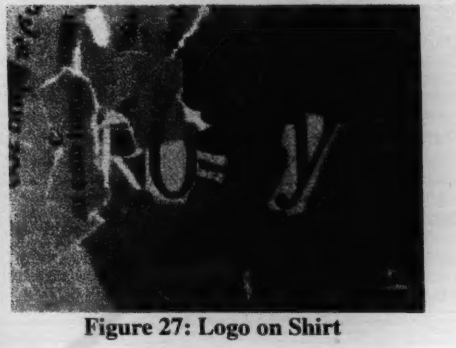

Figure 27: Logo on Shirt

Sarah:	And tell me about the clothes in your self-portrait?
Kate:	On mine we put the yellow shirt that says "Roxy" – I really like that brand, the stuff Roxy makes: the sandals and the purses. It's sometimes really expensive. And we just decided to put Roxy because we wanted our shirts to describe us instead of being plain.
Sarah:	And what does Roxy say about you?
Kate:	Just the stuff that I like. Roxy can also mean sports and I like sports – so that explains that I like sports.

For this participant, the brand she wore spoke to others about who she was in terms of economics and the way she chooses to spend her free time. It said something about her and her relationship with consumption, her peer group and her free time. By making it visible in her self-portrait, she saw it as something she was associated with and wanted others to associate her with as well.

While the physical space of the Petite community has been divided and marked as separate through historical and political decisions by planners, bureaucrats and politicians it still reveals points of intersection and overlap. These points of intersection are most evident within the provincial school that students from the two communities attend.

My original aim to analyze and investigate the use of social space and how it might be racialized was not as overt in the data. However on reading the narratives and my research journal more closely I began to realize that racialization does not operate as a single category but rather in conjunction with other social categories such as gender and age. Thus I agree with Keith and Pile (1993) that "simultaneously present in any landscape are multiple enunciations of distinct forms of space" (p.6).

Gillian Rose, drawing on the work of Stuart Hall (1990) and Doreen Massey (1994) argues for an understanding of geographies of identities in terms of cultural politics. Rose suggests that "spatialities articulate the particular structures of those axes of identity by giving them a spatial form. These forms are also articulations of power: discourse engenders "a spatial order [which] organizes an ensemble of possibilities… and interdictions." Discussion of communities based on land or on the social divisions of schooling engenders a sense of a symbolic community that seems to provide a basis for stability and harmony that is then used to exclude as well as include. So the study indicates that while I initially thought that there were two communities at the heart of my research project the arts informed methods revealed the existence of multiple (racialized, gendered, sexualized) and overlapping communities constructed through social space.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has explored my research data that I have coded under the theme youth transgressions. As has been the case throughout this work, issues of power are central to youth behaviour and misbehaviour; for this reason, I have included data and analysis of space and power in the context of this study. In the following chapter I will draw some conclusions and present recommendations: both pedagogical and research oriented.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Figure 28: The Stop Sign

In the chapters leading up to this point I have introduced my research questions and addressed my positionality and partiality. I have engaged literature on space, youth culture and the socio-historic formation of a community. I have presented my arts-informed methodology as well as data that evolved from this ethnographic study. I have spoken to, and delved into, the themes for this research (living in community spaces, gendered spaces, and youth transgression (authority and discipline) through the last two chapters. In this chapter I will draw conclusions and outline recommendations for both classroom instructional methods and future research projects.

Throughout this thesis, I have represented the data in a way that highlights plausible findings as opposed to proposing one concrete truth. In this concluding section I select and briefly highlight pedagogical recommendations for future classrooms with similar student compositions. As well, I reflect on my own experiences of the research process and pose future questions that could be explored through a similar research model.

Pedagogical Recommendations

1. Engage critical race theory in the classroom.

Racialized tensions were not as overt as I had initially anticipated. I suspect that this can be attributed to, at least in part, my positioning as a white woman and also because I interjected when I heard racist discourse in the school. My whiteness may have also made students cautious of sharing incidents where they felt marginalized via racialization. Perhaps a future classroom situation could work to break down some of the barriers in talking about racialization by addressing it as an ongoing initiative through arts-informed expression, confidential journaling, a longer-term study and some engagement with critical race theory in the classroom (Delgado & Stefancic, 1999). It is also likely that the participants would be more comfortable expressing these perceptions with community insiders who represent both the white settler and Aboriginal communities. If community members set this as a municipal or school initiative perhaps these understandings of racialized tensions and power could be expressed in a safe way rather than through hurtful language and violence as was described in the data chapter.

2. Teach critical media awareness.

Each of the participants touched on their relationship to the media in some way: through their self-portrait, photographs, or through the individual interviews.

Given their relationship to the forms of media (mass and youth-targeted) it would be useful to undertake critical media awareness linking perceptions of media to arts-informed methods of expression. The students could then engage critical understandings, relationships and perceptions of media through a gendered lens.

3. Use additional methods of classroom instruction.

The participants in this study engaged willingly in the methods I posed. Initially, there were times where they appeared to be uncomfortable with using the arts and sharing personal perceptions or facts. This uneasiness passed quickly and they referred to the activities I asked them to do as "fun" and "not work". Using varied methods of instruction in the classroom, particularly the arts, pose rich opportunities for self-reflection and intrinsically motivated initiatives. Accessing such motivation can be difficult at any age but particularly at this stage in development where many of the participants identified their school day as their least favourite time and place in the community.

4. Re-arrange the classroom seating on a regular basis.

Questioning boundaries in terms of friendship patterns, and challenging the participants to work with all of their classmates, could be initiated by rearranging the classroom seating. The classroom was set up in a way that was conducive of student group work and thus students were encouraged to establish self-selected groups for cooperative learning activities. These stations could still remain but perhaps the physical seating structure could change on a scheduled basis. For example, students could sit in clusters and the seating arrangement could be directed by the teacher. This specific teacher did use various methods to arrange the classroom desks but the students were always permitted to select which seat they occupied. This was not the case in all of their classes. Both methods have merit and pose opportunities to explore the ways in which social space is engaged.

Research Recommendations

1. **Use more arts-informed methods in educational research.**

A future area of study that could be undertaken given the same data I used for this thesis is how spatial practices affect narratives. This is evident in the ways space and spatial understandings are reproduced through gendered, classed and racialized connections to various spaces. For example, this was evident in discussions of egging at Halloween and how associations were drawn based on age, racialization and space which were often complicated by other categories like their engagement with police. Similarly, by exploring portrayals of youth culture in the media, the researcher and participants could explore the ways media affects individual lives – their lives.

2. Give participants digital audio recorders to use in their personal time.

If I were to engage with the same study again, I would likely add audio recordings as another form and layer of data. The participants could take a digital recorder home with them and continue to record ideas that surfaced after submitting their cameras. As well, this continuation of the research process would allow them to respond to issues raised during their one-one- interviews. This method would still be fun for the participants and would create a unidirectional journal without requiring the participants to write. Although a written journal could be helpful, I feel that one of the reasons why the participants engaged as fully as they did in this project is because I asked them to express themselves in ways a-typical from the standard classroom.

Sarah Baker (2004) engaged a similar method when she asked her pre-teen girl participants to express their relationships with popular music in social spaces (their bedrooms) using cameras and tape-recorders. The relationship with mainstream media and pop-culture became even more evident through their impersonations of pop music stars and radio personalities. While stimulating and enriching, this method could also serve as a practical solution to the physical distance between the researcher and the research site. By uploading audio files to a school computer, the participants could email their reflections or a comment for follow. This could also be helpful in creating a fluid transition from the research project back to the formal classroom.

3. Explore student perceptions of social spaces as potentially fluid.

Participant engagement with some forms of social space also appeared to depend on socio-economic positioning. Some students accessed spaces they enjoyed because they had a parent, vehicle and financial means to do so, such as extra-curricular activities. Not all spaces were accessible; it would be valuable to explore this in a subsequent study as well as participant perceptions of these spaces and their fluidity. Given the age range of these participants, and their inability to obtain a drivers' license let alone a vehicle, proximity and means of travel appeared to play a big role in terms of leisure time activities which could provide rich data for future work.

Conclusions

I have experienced many tensions throughout the writing process. Some of these include: reflecting on which pieces to include in the final work and which to leave for future engagement; deciding how to best protect the participants' identities while keeping the data (particularly the images they created) true to the participants' intent; and deciding to move forward and share the work of the participants with anyone who may read this or watch a presentation. For the participants, this was part of the original agreement to participate; however, it appeared that the greatest benefit (until this point) came through our interactions and their potential impact on my career, student interactions and ideally the broader community. For example, the classroom teacher has since taken up a photograph unit.

When I left, some of the students wrote me letters that addressed on the time we spent together in the classroom and reflecting on the pieces they created. The focus was on the process rather than what might come of it. In fact there was little interest, if any, about where the finished thesis would end up or what it would be used for. But, as is the case with all university studies, the culmination of a study is dissemination with others who might be able to engage with the work.

In a year where there have been more changes than I ever expected to engage by this point in my life this marks a final piece in my struggles and hopefully signifies a victory of sorts. Optimistically, this piece will continue to evolve through others engaging it, my own reflection – research and career directives – and most importantly in the community where it was carried out. Just as Widel (1995) said, images are used to create a "context within which to talk and to write" (p. 77) and it is my hope that this work is the beginning of that process with regard to this data and the questions I have addressed.

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Appendix 1: Guardians – Letter of Introduction

[Date]

Dear *[Guardian of Participant]*,

My name is Sarah Hoffman, and I am a master's student in the Department of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Alberta. I have been working with *[Teacher Name]* in the *[Subject and Grade]* on the project entitled: *Students' Perceptions of Community Space: Visual Interpretations.*

The purpose of this study is to explore how students perceive and interact with community spaces and to assist in developing our understandings of what living in Petite is like for young people. Specifically, it is my hope that an understanding of how students use common spaces in Petite will assist schools and school administrators in developing curriculum and programs to facilitate safe and caring communities. This proposed study will form the basis of my master's thesis.

As part of the research your child will be invited to take photographs of school and public spaces. No photographs of individual students will be taken. Once the images are developed, I will invite six to eight students to participate further in my study by discussing their images and their relationship with the spaces they have chosen to photograph. At the end of this portion of the project, your child will receive a copy of each of his or her photographs. Your child's images will not be formally involved in the study without contacting you first for your written consent. If your child is among the six to eight students who are invited to participate formally, the images may be used in my master's thesis, and for publication and presentation through scholarly journals and conferences. Your child's identity will be concealed at all times. The photographs that will be used in the study will be of places, not people.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions concerning the research study at this point, or at any point during the study. You can also contact my master's supervisor at the university, Dr. Jennifer Kelly at (780) 492-4229 or jennifer.kelly@ualberta.ca.

Sincerely,

Sarah M. Hoffman

Appendix 2: Guardians – Letter of Consent

[Date]

Dear *[Guardian of Participant]*,

This letter is intended as an update of the research project entitled *Students' Perceptions of Community Space: Visual Interpretations* and to invite your child to participate in the next portion of the research. On *[date of initial letter Appendix B-1]* I sent an initial letter explaining that your child was involved in the photography piece of the project. Since then, your child has taken several pictures exploring community spaces. We have met once to sort the images and *[name of child]* has selected six images that *[he/she]* would like to include in the study. These photographs are of places, not people.

I would like to invite *[name of child]* to participate in the next portion of the study. This component includes interviews and the potential publication of *[name of child]*'s photographs. The first interview will be approximately one hour and we may decide to have a follow-up interview if necessary. Prior to the interview with your child I will ask permission from *[him/her]* to take notes and digitally record our interviews.

At the end of the project, your child will receive a copy of each of his or her photographs and a written copy of the interview in which your child was specifically involved. Your child will be free to make additions or deletions to the text before I analyze the information as data. The interview will be confidential. Only my supervisor at the University of Alberta, Dr. Jennifer Kelly, and I will have access to the data. I will discuss the study while protecting your child's identity with my supervisor. The transcripts, images and audio recordings will be kept in a secure location under my ownership and will be destroyed after five years. Your child's name and identifiable images will not be used. To maintain confidentiality with the participants, the staff and students at your child's school will not have access to the data, and you will only be consulted if something surfaces in the interview of which you should be informed. Your child will be asked to review the data that he or she generated before it is used for analysis and distributed.

I ask that you, and your child, anticipate participating in this study for the duration (an estimated two months). However, you, or your child, may withdrawal from this study either fully or in part at any point without consequence. If you so choose, any – or all – data connected to your child's participation will be destroyed.

This study will not pose any risk to your child. In compliance with the University Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants, participants have the right to:

- not participate
- withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice
- opt out without penalty and exclude any data from the study
- privacy, anonymity and confidentiality

Before each interview begins, I will remind *[name of child]* of *[his or her]* rights. Privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity will be maintained through (a) using of pseudonyms (b) avoiding quotations that have the potential to identify *[him/her]* in my writings (c) avoiding the use of images that explicitly identify people. All recordings, transcripts, and notes will be securely stored and destroyed after five years. If you would like a copy of the final report this will also be available to you.

I have attached two consent forms for your consideration. If you choose to accept this invitation for your child to participate in this study please read, sign and return one to me. You may keep the second copy for your records. Please feel free to contact me at if you have any questions.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education and Extension Research Ethics Board (EE REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EE REB at (780) 492-3751. Questions concerning the research study at this point, or at any point during the study, should you choose to participate, can be directed to me, or my supervisor, Dr. Jennifer Kelly at (780) 492-4229 or jennifer.kelly@ualberta.ca.

Sincerely,

Sarah M. Hoffman

Appendix 3: Guardian Participant Informed Consent

Title of Project: **Students' Perceptions of Community Space: Visual Interpretations**
Principal Investigator: Sarah M. Hoffman
University of Alberta, Education Policy Studies
shoffman@ualberta.ca

By signing this form, you indicate your understanding of the research project and agree to allow your child to participate. In giving your consent, your child has the right to:

- privacy, anonymity and confidentiality
- withdraw participation at any point during the study without explanation or penalty
- safeguards to security of data
- a copy of interview transcripts for review and modification
- a copy of this consent form for your reference
- a copy of the final report upon request

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education and Extension Research Ethics Board (EE REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EE REB at (780) 492-3751 or http://www.ualberta.ca/~unisecr/policy/sec66.html.

If you require any further information or explanation, please contact me at shoffman@ualberta.ca. My thesis supervisor is Dr. Jennifer Kelly and she would also be willing to discuss this project with you. She can be contacted at (780) 492 – 4229 or jennifer.kelly@ualberta.ca.

____
Participant Name

______________________________ ______________________________
Printed Name of Guardian Signature of Guardian

Date: ____________________ Telephone: __________________________

Mailing Address:

Researcher's Signature: ______________________ Date: __________

Appendix 4: Students – Information Letter/Letter of Consent

[Date]

Dear *[Name of Participant]*,

I would like to invite you to participate in the next portion of the study: *Students' Perceptions of Community Space: Visual Interpretations*. This component includes interviews and the potential publication of your photographs. The first interview will be approximately one hour and we may decide to have a follow-up interview if necessary. Prior to the interview I will ask your permission to take notes and digitally record our interviews.

At the end of the project, you will receive a written copy of your interview. You will be free to make additions or deletions to the text before I analyze it as data. The interview will be completely confidential. Only my supervisor at the university, Dr. Jennifer Kelly, and I will have access to the data. I will discuss the study while protecting your identity, only with my supervisor. The transcripts, images and audio recordings will be kept in a secure location under my ownership and will be destroyed after five years. Your name and identifiable images will not be used. To maintain confidentiality, the staff and students at the school will not have access to the data, and your guardians will only be consulted if something surfaces in the interview of which they should be informed.

I ask that you anticipate participating in this study for the duration (an estimated two months) should you accept this invitation. However, you may withdraw from this study either fully or in part at any point without consequence. If you so choose, any – or all – data connected to you will be destroyed.

This study will not pose any risk to you. In compliance with the University Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants, you have the right to:

- not participate
- withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice
- opt out without penalty and exclude any data from the study
- privacy, anonymity and confidentiality

I will remind you before each interview begins of your rights.

I have attached two consent forms for your consideration. If you choose to accept this invitation to participate in this study please read, sign and return one to me. You may keep the second copy for your records. There are also two consent forms for your guardian and a letter explaining the project and asking for your guardian's consent as well. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education and Extension Research Ethics Board (EE REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EE REB at (780) 492-3751. Questions concerning the research study at this point, or at any point during the study, should you choose to participate, can be directed to me, or my supervisor, Dr. Jennifer Kelly at (780) 492-4229 or jennifer.kelly@ualberta.ca.

Sincerely,

Sarah M. Hoffman
shoffman@ualberta.ca

Appendix 5: Student Participant Informed Consent

Title of Project: **Students' Perceptions of Community Space: Visual Interpretations**

Principal Investigator: Sarah M. Hoffman

University of Alberta, Education Policy Studies
shoffman@ualberta.ca

To be completed by the research participant:

Do you understand that you have been asked to be in a research study?	Yes	No
Have you read and received a copy of the attached Information Sheet	Yes	No
Do you understand the benefits and risks involved in taking part in this research study?	Yes	No
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?	Yes	No
Do you understand that you are free to refuse to participate, or to withdraw from the study at any time, without consequence, in part, or all of the information you provided will be withdrawn at your request?	Yes	No
Has the issue of confidentiality been explained to you? Do you understand who will have access to your information?	Yes	No

This study was explained to me by: ______________________________

I agree to take part in this study:

______________________ ________ ____________________
Signature of Research Participant Date Witness

____
Printed Name

I believe that the person signing this form understands what is involved in the study and voluntarily agrees to participate.

____________________________ ______________________
Signature of Investigator or Designee Date

Appendix 6: Sample Interview Questions

1) 15 minute sorting of images and initial introduction questions:
    - Tell me a bit about yourself.
    - What classes are you in?
    - Tell me a bit about your family.
    - Have you attended any other schools?
    - What would you name the six spaces you photographed?

2) One hour in-depth interview:
    - Tell me about how you choose the six spaces you photographed.
    - Where are these spaces – in town, out of town?
    - When do you go to these spaces?
    - Who else goes to these spaces?
    - Do you spend time in each of these spaces alone or with others?
    - Tell me about what types of things you do when you go to this space.
    - Tell me a bit about your friends.
    - How did you select your options/extracurricular activities?

Appendix 7: Written Response (Green Sheet) Questions

Name:

Self-Portrait Questions:
What are the distinctive things that make me "me"?
How do I want people to see me?
Who do I want to become?
When I think of ***community*** the first five things that come to mind are:

Community spaces *I like:*
Space name
Time of day and year when I go there
People who go there
What I do there

Community Spaces *I do not like:*
Space name
Time of day and year when I go there
People who go there
What I do there